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THE

WORKS

OF

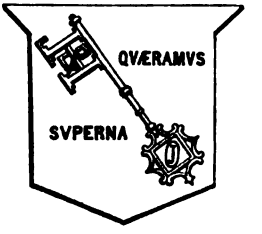
JOHN OWEN, D.D.

EDITED

BY THE REV. WILLIAM H. GOOLD,

EDINBURGH.

VOL. IV.



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ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ·

OR,

A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE HOLY SPIRIT,

CONTINUED:

EMBRACING THE CONSIDERATION OF

HIS WORK AS THE SPIRIT OF ILLUMINATION, OF SUPPLICATION, OF CONSOLATION, AND AS THE IMMEDIATE AUTHOR OF ALL SPIRITUAL OFFICES AND GIFTS.

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THE REASON OF FAITH;

OR,

AN ANSWER UNTO THAT INQUIRY, "WHEREFORE WE BELIEVE THE SCRIPTURE TO BE THE WORD OF GOD;"

WITH

THE CAUSES AND NATURE OF THAT FAITH WHEREWITH WE DO SO:

WHEREIN

THE GROUNDS WHEREON THE HOLY SCRIPTURE IS BELIEVED TO BE THE WORD OF GOD WITH FAITH DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL ARE DECLARED AND VINDICATED.

BY JOHN OWEN, D.D.

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.—LUKE xvi. 31.

LONDON: 1677.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE subject of this treatise belongs to the office of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the minds of believers. It is the first part of what may be regarded as the sixth book in the work of our author on the dispensation and operations of the Spirit, and is occupied with an answer to the question, on what grounds, or for what reason, we believe the Scripture to be the word of God. When it was published, the novel views of the Friends, to whom Owen frequently in his work on the Spirit alludes, had become extensively known. Barclay's famous "Apology for the True Christian Divinity" had just appeared; in which their views received the advantage of a scientific treatment and formal exhibition. The essential principle of the system is "the inward light" ascribed to every man, consequent upon a peculiar tenet, according to which the operation of the Holy Spirit in his office of illumination is universal,—so universal that even where the facts of the gospel are utterly unknown, as in heathen countries, this light exists in every man, and by due submission to its guidance he would be saved. How far this notion was simply a mistaken recoil to an opposite extreme from the high views of ecclesiastical prerogative which certain divines of the Church of England were fond of urging, is an inquiry scarcely within our province. It is an instructive fact, however, that mysticism, in claiming a special inspiration for every man, manifests no very remote affinity with the modern scepticism that admits the inspiration of Scripture, but only in such a sense as makes inspiration common to all authorship. However wide and vital may be the discrepancy in other respects between the mystic and the sceptic, in this principle they seem at one; and they are at one also to some extent in the practical tendencies it engenders, such as the disparagement of the Scriptures as an objective rule of faith and life. The Scriptures, according to the Friends, are only "a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit," or, in other words, to the inward light.

In opposition to such principles, the authority, sufficiency, and infallibility, of the Scriptures, were ably proved by many writers of the Church of England; whose services in this department are freely acknowledged in this treatise. Somewhat rationalistic in their spirit, however, and driven perhaps to a greater rationalism of tone by the fanatical excesses which they sought to rebuke, they stated the question in such terms as superseded the necessity of supernatural influence in order to the production of saving faith in the divine word; and even such a writer as Tillotson speaks vaguely about "the principles of natural religion" governing all our reasonings about the evidence and interpretation of revealed truth. If Owen, therefore, affirmed the necessity of the Spirit for the due credence of revelation, he might be confounded with "the professors of the inward light;" and he actually was charged by divines of the class to which we have alluded with this and kindred errors. If, on the other hand, he affirmed the competency of the external evidences of revelation to produce a conviction of its divine authority, it might be insinuated or fancied that he was overlooking the work of the Spirit as the source of faith. It is his object to show that, in truth, he was committed to neither extreme; that while external arguments deserve and must be allowed their proper weight, the faith by which we receive Scripture must be the same in origin and essence with the faith by which we receive the truths contained in it; that faith of this description implies the effectual illumination of the Holy Spirit; and that in this illumination there is no particular and internal testimony, equivalent to inspiration or to an immediate revelation from God, to each believer personally. The Spirit is the *efficient cause* by which faith is implanted; but not the *objective ground* on which our faith rests. The objective ground or reason of faith, according to our author, is "the authority and veracity of God revealing themselves in the Scripture and by it;" and Scripture must be received for its own sake, as the word of God, apart from external arguments and authoritative testimony. The grounds on which it is thus to be received resolve themselves into what is now known by the designation of the experimental evidence in favour of Christianity,—the renewing and sanctifying effect of divine truth on the mind. It might be objected, that if the Spirit be requisite to appreciate the force of the Christian evidence, so as to acquire true and proper faith in Scripture as the word of God, men who do not enjoy spiritual enlightenment would be free from any obligation to receive it as divine. The treatise is fitly closed by a brief but satisfactory reply to this and similar objections.

It has sometimes been questioned if Owen, with all his excellencies and gifts, has any claim to be regarded as an original thinker. This treatise of itself substantiates such a claim in his behalf. It is the first recognition of the experimental evidence of Christianity,—that great branch in the varied evidences of our faith to which the bulk of plain Christians, unable to overtake or even comprehend the voluminous authorship on the subject of the external evidences, stand indebted for the clearness and strength of their religious convictions. It could not be the first discovery of this evidence, for its nature implies that it had been in operation ever since revelation dawned on the race; but Owen has the merit of first distinctly and formally recognising its existence and value. He seems to have been himself quite aware of the freshness and importance of the line of thought on which he had entered, for, anxious to make his argument clear, he has himself in the appendix supplied an abstract and analysis of it, and accompanied it with some testimonies from various authors in confirmation of the premises on which his conclusions rest. The treatise was published in 1677, without any division into chapters. We borrow, from a subsequent edition, a division of this sort, by which the steps in the reasoning are indicated.—ED.

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PREFACE.

HAVING added a brief account of the design, order, and method of the ensuing discourse in an appendix at the close of it, I shall not here detain the reader with the proposal of them; yet some few things remain which I judge it necessary to mind him of. Be he who he will, I am sure we shall not differ about the weight of the argument in hand; for whether it be the truth we contend for or otherwise, yet it will not be denied but that the determination of it, and the settling of the minds of men about it, are of the highest concernment unto them. But whereas so much hath been written of late by others on this subject, any farther debate of it may seem either needless or unseasonable. Something, therefore, may be spoken to evidence that the reader is not imposed on by that which may absolutely fall under either of these characters. Had the end in and by these discourses been effectually accomplished, it had been altogether useless to renew an endeavour unto the same purpose; but whereas an opposition unto the Scripture, and the grounds whereon we believe it to be a divine revelation, is still openly continued amongst us, a continuation of the defence of the one and the other cannot reasonably be judged either needless or unseasonable. Besides, most of the discourses published of late on this subject have had their peculiar designs, wherein that here tendered is not expressly engaged: for some of them do principally aim to prove that we have sufficient grounds to believe the Scripture, without any recourse unto or reliance upon the authoritative proposal of the church of Rome; which they have sufficiently evinced, beyond any possibility of rational contradiction from their adversaries. Others have pleaded and vindicated those rational considerations whereby our assent unto the divine original of it is fortified and confirmed, against the exceptions and objections of such whose love of sin and resolutions to live therein tempt them to seek for shelter in an atheistical contempt of the authority of God, evidencing itself therein. But as neither of these are utterly neglected in the ensuing discourse, so the peculiar design of it is of another nature; for the inquiries managed therein,—namely, What is the obligation upon us to believe the Scripture to be the word of God? What are the causes and what is the nature of that faith whereby we do so? What it rests on and is resolved into, so as to become a divine and acceptable duty?—do respect the consciences of men immediately, and the way whereby they may come to rest and assurance in believing. Whereas, therefore, it is evident that many are often shaken in their minds with those atheistical objections against the divine original and authority of the Scripture which they frequently meet withal, [and] that many know not how to extricate themselves from the ensnaring questions that they are often attacked withal about them,—not for want of a due assent unto them, but of a right understanding what is the true and formal reason of that assent, what is the firm basis and foundation that it rests upon, what answer they may directly and peremptorily give unto that inquiry, *Wherefore do you believe the Scripture to be the word of God?* —I have endeavoured to give them those directions herein, that, upon a due exami-

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nation, they will find compliant with the Scripture itself, right reason, and their own experience. I am not, therefore, altogether without hopes that this small discourse may have its use, and be given out in its proper season. Moreover, I think it necessary to acquaint the reader that, as I have allowed all the arguments pleaded by others to prove the divine authority of the Scripture their proper place and force, so where I differ in the explication of any thing belonging unto this subject from the conceptions of other men, I have candidly examined such opinions, and the arguments wherewith they are confirmed, without straining the words, cavilling at the expressions, or reflections on the persons of any of the authors of them. And whereas I have myself been otherwise dealt withal by many, and know not how soon I may be so again, I do hereby free the persons of such humours and inclinations from all fear of any reply from me, or the least notice of what they shall be pleased to write or say. Such kind of writings are of the same consideration with me as those multiplied false reports which some have raised concerning me; the most of them so ridiculous and foolish, so alien from my principles, practices, and course of life, as I cannot but wonder how any persons pretending to gravity and sobriety are not sensible how their credulity and inclinations are abused in the hearing and reception of them. The occasion of this discourse is that which, in the last place, I shall acquaint the reader withal. About three years since I published a book about the dispensation and operations of the Spirit of God. That book was one part only of what I designed on that subject. The consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of illumination, of supplication, of consolation, and as the immediate author of all spiritual offices and gifts, extraordinary and ordinary, is designed unto the second part of it. Hereof this ensuing discourse is concerning one part of his work as a *Spirit of illumination;* which, upon the earnest requests of some acquainted with the nature and substance of it, I have suffered to come out by itself, that it might be of the more common use and more easily obtained.

May 11, 1677.

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THE REASON OF FAITH;

OR,

THE GROUNDS WHEREON THE SCRIPTURE IS BELIEVED TO BE THE WORD OF GOD WITH FAITH DIVINE AND SUPERNATURAL.

CHAPTER I.

The subject stated—Preliminary remarks.

THE principal design of that discourse whereof the ensuing treatise is a part, is to declare the work of the Holy Ghost in the illumination of the minds of men,—for this work is particularly and eminently ascribed unto him,—or the efficacy of the grace of God by him dispensed, Eph. i. 17, 18; Heb. vi. 4; Luke ii. 32; Acts xiii. 47, xvi. 14, xxvi. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 4; 1 Pet. ii. 9. The objective cause and outward means of it are the subjects at present designed unto consideration; and it will issue in these two inquiries:—

1. On what grounds, or for what reason, we do believe the Scripture to be the word of God with faith divine and supernatural, as it is required of us in a way of duty?

2. How or by what means we may come to understand aright the mind of God in the Scripture, or the revelations that are made unto us of his mind and will therein?

For by *illumination* in general, as it denotes an effect wrought in the minds of men, I understand that supernatural knowledge that any man hath or may have of the mind and will of God, as revealed unto him by supernatural means, for the law of his faith, life, and obedience. And this, so far as it is comprised in the first of these inquiries, is that whose declaration we at present design, reserving the latter unto a distinct discourse by itself also. Unto the former some things may be premised:—

First, *Supernatural revelation is the only objective cause and means of supernatural illumination.* These things are commensurate. There is a natural knowledge of supernatural things, and that both theoretical and practical, Rom. i. 19, ii. 14, 15; and there may be a supernatural knowledge of natural things, 1 Kings iv. 31–34; Exod. xxxi. 2–6. But unto this supernatural illumination it is required both that its object be things only supernaturally revealed, or

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as supernaturally revealed, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, and that it be wrought in us by a supernatural efficiency, or the immediate efficacy of the Spirit of God, Eph. i. 17–19; 2 Cor. iv. 6. This David prays for, Ps. cxix. 18, גַּל־עֵינַי, "'Reveal,' or uncover mine eyes, bring light and spiritual understanding into my mind, 'that I may behold' (*ἀναπεκαλυμμένῳ προσώπῳ*, "with open face," or as in the Syriac, בְּאַפָּא גְּלִיתָא, "with a revealed or uncovered face," the veil being taken away, 2 Cor. iii. 18) 'wondrous things out of thy law.'" The light he prayed for within did merely respect the doctrine of the law without. This the apostle fully declares, Heb. i. 1, 2. The various supernatural revelations that God hath made of himself, his mind and will, from first to last, are the sole and adequate object of supernatural illumination.

Secondly, This *divine external revelation* was originally, by various ways (which we have elsewhere declared), given unto sundry persons immediately, partly for their own instruction and guidance in the knowledge of God and his will, and partly by their ministry to be communicated unto the church. So was it granted unto Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who thereon prophesied, to the warning and instruction of others, Jude 14, 15; and to Noah, who became thereby a preacher of righteousness, 2 Pet. ii. 5; and to Abraham, who thereon commanded his children and household to keep the way of the Lord, Gen. xviii. 19. And other instances of the like kind may be given, chap. iv. 26, v. 29. And this course did God continue a long time, even from the first promise to the giving of the law, before any revelations were committed to writing, for the space of two thousand four hundred and sixty years; for so long a season did God enlighten the minds of men by supernatural, external, immediate, occasional revelations. Sundry things may be observed of this divine dispensation; as,—

1. That *it did sufficiently evidence itself to be from God* unto the minds of those unto whom it was granted, and theirs also unto whom these revelations were by them communicated: for during this season Satan used his utmost endeavours to possess the minds of men with his delusions, under the pretence of divine, supernatural inspirations; for hereunto belongs the original of all his oracles and enthusiasms among the nations of the world. There was, therefore, a divine power and efficacy attending all divine revelations, ascertaining and infallibly assuring the minds of men of their being from God; for if it had not been so, men had never been able to secure themselves that they were not imposed on by the crafty deceits of Satan, especially in such revelations as seemed to contain things contrary to their reason, as in the command given to Abraham for the sacrificing his son, Gen. xxii. 2. Wherefore, these immediate revelations had not been a sufficient means to secure the faith and obedience of the

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church if they had not carried along with them their own evidence that they were from God. Of what nature that evidence was we shall afterwards inquire. For the present I shall only say, that it was an evidence unto *faith*, and not to *sense;* as is that also which we have now by the Scripture. It is not like that which the sun gives of itself by its light, which there needs no exercise of reason to assure us of, for sense is irresistibly affected with it; but it is like the evidence which the heavens and the earth give of their being made and created of God, and thereby of his being and power. This they do undeniably and infallibly, Ps. xix. 1, 2; Rom. i. 19–21. Yet it is required hereunto that men do use and exercise the best of their rational abilities in the consideration and contemplation of them. Where this is neglected, notwithstanding their open and visible evidence unto the contrary, men degenerate into atheism. God so gave out these revelations of himself as to require the exercise of the faith, conscience, obedience, and reason of them unto whom they were made; and therein they gave full assurance of their proceeding from him. So he tells us that his word differeth from all other pretended revelations as the wheat doth from the chaff, Jer. xxiii. 28. But yet it is our duty to try and sift the wheat from the chaff, or we may not evidently discern the one from the other.

2. The things so revealed were *sufficient* to guide and direct all persons in the knowledge of their duty to God, in all that was required of them in a way of faith or obedience. God from the beginning gave out the knowledge of his will πολυμερῶς, by sundry parts and degrees; yet so that every age and season had light enough to guide them in the whole obedience required of them, and unto their edification therein. They had knowledge enough to enable them to offer sacrifices in faith, as did Abel; to walk with God, as did Enoch; and to teach their families the fear of the Lord, as did Abraham. The world perished not for want of sufficient revelation of the mind of God at any time. Indeed, when we go to consider those divine instructions which are upon record that God granted unto them, we are scarce able to discern how they were sufficiently enlightened in all that was necessary for them to believe and do; but they were unto them "as a light shining in a dark place." Set up but a candle in a dark room, and it will sufficiently enlighten it for men to attend their necessary occasions therein; but when the sun is risen, and shineth in at all the windows, the light of the candle grows so dim and useless that it seems strange that any could have advantage thereby. The Sun of Righteousness is now risen upon us, and immortality is brought to light by the gospel. If we look now on the revelations granted unto them of old, we may yet see there was light in them, which yields us little more advantage than the light of a candle

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in the sun; but unto them who lived before this Sun arose, they were a sufficient guide unto all duties of faith and obedience; for,—

3. There was during this season a *sufficient ministry* for the declaration of the *revelations* which God made of himself and his will. There was the natural ministry of parents, who were obliged to instruct their children and families in the knowledge of the truth which they had received; and whereas this began in Adam, who first received the promise, and therewithal whatsoever was necessary unto faith and obedience, the knowledge of it could not be lost without the wilful neglect of parents in teaching, or of children and families in learning. And they had the extraordinary ministry of such as God intrusted new revelations withal, for the confirmation and enlargement of those before received; who were all of them preachers of righteousness unto the rest of mankind. And it may be manifested that from the giving of the first promise, when divine external revelations began to be the rule of faith and life unto the church, to the writing of the law, there was always alive one or other, who, receiving divine revelations immediately, were a kind of infallible guides unto others. If it was otherwise at any time, it was after the death of the patriarchs, before the call of Moses, during which time all things went into darkness and confusion; for oral tradition alone would not preserve the truth of former revelations. But by whomsoever these instructions were received, they had a sufficient outward means for their illumination, before any divine revelations were recorded by writing. Yet,—

4. This way of instruction, as it was in itself *imperfect* and liable to many disadvantages, so through the weakness, negligence, and wickedness of men, it proved *insufficient* to retain the knowledge of God in the world: for under this dispensation the generality of mankind fell into their great apostasy from God, and betook themselves unto the conduct and service of the devil; of the ways, means, and degrees whereof I have discoursed elsewhere.[1] Hereon God also regarded them not, but "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways," Acts xiv. 16, "giving them up to their own hearts' lusts," to "walk in their own counsels," as it is expressed, Ps. lxxxi. 12. And although this fell not out without the horrible wickedness and ingratitude of the world, yet there being then no *certain standard* of divine truth whereunto they might repair, they brake off the easier from God, through the imperfection of this dispensation. If it shall be said, that since the revelation of the will of God hath been committed unto writing men have apostatized from the knowledge of God, as is evident in many nations of the world which some time professed the gospel, but are now overrun with heathenism, Mo-

[1] De Natura Theologiæ, lib. iii.

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hammedanism, and idolatry, I say, this hath not come to pass through any defect in the way and means of illumination, or the communication of the truth unto them, but God hath given them up to be destroyed for their wickedness and ingratitude; and "except we repent we shall all likewise perish," Rom. i. 18; 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12, Luke xiii. 3. Otherwise, where the standard of the word is once fixed, there is a constant means of preserving divine revelations. Wherefore,—

Thirdly, God hath gathered up into the *Scripture* all divine revelations given out by himself from the beginning of the world, and all that ever shall be so to the end thereof, which are of general use unto the church, that it may be thoroughly instructed in the whole mind and will of God, and directed in all that worship of him and obedience unto him which is necessary to give us acceptance with him here, and to bring us unto the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter; for,—1. When God first committed the law to writing, with all those things which accompanied it, he obliged the church unto the use of it *alone*, without additions of any kind. Now, this he would not have done had he not expressed therein,—that is, in the books of Moses,—all that was any way needful unto the faith and obedience of the church: for he did not only command them to attend with all diligence unto his word as it was then written, for their instruction and direction in faith and obedience, annexing all sorts of promises unto their so doing, Deut. vi. 6, 7, but also expressly forbids them, as was said, to add any thing thereunto or to conjoin any thing therewith, Deut. iv. 2, xii. 32; which he would not have done had he omitted other divine revelations before given that were any way necessary unto the use of the church. As he added many new ones, so he gathered in all the old from the unfaithful repository of tradition, and fixed them in a writing given by divine inspiration. 2. For all other divine revelations which were given out to the church for its use in general under the Old Testament, they are all comprised in the *following books* thereof; nor was this, that I know of, ever questioned by any person pretending to sobriety, though some, who would be glad of any pretence against the integrity and perfection of the Scripture, have fruitlessly wrangled about the loss of some books, which they can never prove concerning any one that was certainly of a divine original. 3. The full revelation of the whole mind of God, whereunto nothing pretending thereunto is ever to be added, was committed unto and perfected by *Jesus Christ*, Heb. i. 1, 2. That the revelations of God made by him, whether in his own person or by his Spirit unto his apostles, were also by divine inspiration committed to writing, is expressly affirmed concerning what he delivered in his own personal ministry, Luke i. 4, Acts i. 1, John xx. 31, and may be proved by uncontrollable argu-

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ments concerning the rest of them. Hence, as the Scriptures of the Old Testament were shut up with a caution and admonition unto the church to adhere unto the law and testimony, with threatening of a curse unto the contrary, Mal. iv. 4–6; so the writings of the New Testament are closed with a curse on any that shall presume to add any thing more thereunto, Rev. xxii. 18. Wherefore,—

Fourthly, The Scripture is now become the *only external means of divine supernatural illumination*, because it is the only repository of all divine supernatural revelation, Ps. xix. 7, 8; Isa. viii. 20; 2 Tim. iii. 15–17. The pretences of tradition, as a collateral means of preserving and communicating supernatural revelation, have been so often evicted of falsity that I shall not farther press their impeachment. Besides, I intend those in this discourse by whom it is acknowledged that the Bible is, as a sufficient and perfect, so the only treasury of divine revelations; and what hath been offered by any to weaken or impair its esteem, by taking off from its credibility, perfection, and sufficiency, as unto all its own proper ends, hath brought no advantage unto the church, nor benefit unto the faith of believers. But yet,—

Fifthly, In asserting the Scripture to be the *only* external means of divine revelation, I do it not exclusively unto those institutions of God which are subordinate unto it, and appointed as means to make it effectual unto our souls; as,—

1. Our own *personal endeavours*, in reading, studying, and meditating on the Scripture, that we may come unto a right apprehension of the things contained in it, are required unto this purpose. It is known to all how frequently this duty is pressed upon us, and what promises are annexed to the performance of it: see Deut. vi. 6, 7, xi. 18, 19; Josh. i. 8; Ps. i. 2, cxix.; Col. iii. 16; 2 Tim. iii. 15. Without this it is in vain to expect illumination by the word; and, therefore, we may see multitudes living and walking in extreme darkness when yet the word is everywhere nigh unto them. Bread, which is the staff of life, will yet nourish no man who doth not provide it and feed upon it; no more would manna, unless it was gathered and prepared. Our own nature and the nature of divine revelations considered, and what is necessary for the application of the one to the other, make this evident; for God will instruct us in his mind and will, as we are men, in and by the rational faculties of our souls. Nor is an external revelation capable of making any other impression on us but what is so received. Wherefore, when I say that the Scripture is the only external means of our illumination, I include therein all our own personal endeavours to come to the knowledge of the mind of God therein; which shall be afterwards spoken unto. And those who, under any pretences, do

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keep, drive, or persuade men from reading and meditating on the Scripture, do take an effectual course to keep them in and under the power of darkness.

2. The *mutual instruction* of one another in the mind of God out of the Scripture is also required hereunto; for we are obliged by the law of nature to endeavour the good of others in various degrees, as our children, our families, our neighbours, and all with whom we have conversation. And this is the principal good, absolutely considered, that we can communicate unto others,—namely, to instruct them in the knowledge of the mind of God. This whole duty, in all the degrees of it, is represented in that command, "Thou shalt teach my words diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up," Deut. vi. 7. Thus, when our Saviour found his disciples talking of the things of God by the way-side, he, bearing unto them the person of a private man, instructed them in the sense of the Scripture, Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 32. And the neglect of this duty in the world,—which is so great that the very mention of it, or the least attempt to perform it, is a matter of scorn and reproach,—is one cause of that great ignorance and darkness which yet abounds among us. But the nakedness of this folly, whereby men would be esteemed Christians in the open contempt of all duties of Christianity, will in due time be laid open.

3. The *ministry of the word* in the church is that which is principally included in this assertion. The Scripture is the only means of illumination, but it becometh so principally by the application of it unto the minds of men in the ministry of the word: see Matt. v. 14, 15; 2 Cor. v. 18–20; Eph. iv. 11–15; 1 Tim. iii. 15. The church and the ministry of it are the ordinances of God unto this end, that his mind and will, as revealed in the word, may be made known to the children of men, whereby they are enlightened. And that church and ministry whereof this is not the first principal design and work is neither appointed of God nor approved by him. Men will one day find themselves deceived in trusting to empty names; it is duty alone that will be comfort and reward, Dan. xii. 3.

Sixthly, That the *Scripture*, which thus contains the whole of divine revelation, may be a sufficient external cause of illumination unto us, two things are required:—

1. That we *believe it to be a divine revelation*,—that is, the word of God, or a declaration of himself, his mind and will, immediately proceeding from him; or that it is of a pure divine original, proceeding neither from the folly or deceit, nor from the skill or honesty of men. So is it stated, 2 Pet. i. 19–21; Heb. i. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 16; Isa. viii. 20. It tenders no light or instruction under any other

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notion but as it comes immediately from God; "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God," 1 Thess. ii. 13. And whatever any one may learn from or by the Scriptures under any other consideration, it belongeth not unto the illumination we inquire after, Nehem. viii. 8; Isa. xxviii. 9; Hos. xiv. 9; Prov. i. 6; Ps. cxix. 34; Matt. xv. 16; 2 Tim. ii. 7; 1 John v. 20.

2. That we *understand the things declared in it*, or the mind of God as revealed and expressed therein; for if it be given unto us a sealed book, which we cannot read, either because it is sealed or because we are ignorant and cannot read, whatever visions or means of light it hath in it, we shall have no advantage thereby, Isa. xxix. 11, 12. It is not the words themselves of the Scripture only, but our understanding them, that gives us light: Ps. cxix. 130, פֵּתַח־דְּבָרֶיךָ יָאִיר,—"the opening the door," "the entrance of thy word, giveth light." It must be opened, or it will not enlighten. So the disciples understood not the testimonies of the Scripture concerning the Lord Christ, they were not enlightened by them, until he expounded them unto them, Luke xxiv. 27, 45. And we have the same instance in the eunuch and Philip, Acts viii. 31, 34, 35. To this very day the nation of the Jews have the scriptures of the Old Testament and the outward letter of them in such esteem and veneration that they even adore and worship them, yet are they not enlightened by it. And the same is fallen out among many that are called Christians, or they could never embrace such foolish opinions and practise such idolatries in worship as some of them do, who yet enjoy the letter of the gospel.

And this brings me to my design, which we have been thus far making way unto; and it is to show that both these are from the Holy Ghost,—namely, that we truly believe the Scripture to be the word of God, and that we understand savingly the mind of God therein; both which belong unto our illumination.

That which I shall FIRST inquire into is, the way how, and the ground whereon, we come to believe the Scripture to be the word of God in a due manner: for that this is required of us in a way of duty, namely, that we should believe the Scripture to be the word of God with faith divine and supernatural, I suppose will not be denied, and it shall be afterwards proved; and what is the work of the Spirit of God herein will be our first inquiry.

SECONDLY, Whereas we see by experience that all who have or enjoy the Scripture do not yet understand it, or come to an useful, saving knowledge of the mind and will of God therein revealed, our other inquiry shall be, how we may come to understand the word of God aright, and what is the work of the Spirit of God in the assistance which he affordeth us unto that purpose.

With respect unto the first of these inquiries, whereunto the pre-

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sent discourse is singly designed, I affirm, That *it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to believe the Scripture to be the word of God*, or the supernatural, immediate revelation of his mind unto us, and infallibly to evidence it unto our minds, so as that we may spiritually and savingly acquiesce therein. Some, upon a mistake of this proposition, do seem to suppose that we resolve all faith into private suggestions of the Spirit or deluding pretences thereof; and some (it may be) will be ready to apprehend that we confound the efficient cause and formal reason of faith or believing, rendering all rational arguments and external testimonies useless. But, indeed, there neither is nor shall be any occasion administered unto these fears or imaginations; for we shall plead nothing in this matter but what is consonant to the faith and judgment of the ancient and present church of God, as shall be fully evidenced in our progress. I know some have found out other ways whereby the minds of men, as they suppose, may be sufficiently satisfied in the divine authority of the Scripture; but I have tasted of their new wine and desire it not, because I know the old to be better, though what they plead is of use in its proper place.

CHAPTER II.

What it is infallibly to believe the Scripture to be the word of God, affirmed.

My design requires that I should confine my discourse unto as narrow bounds as possible, and I shall so do, showing,—

I. What it is in general *infallibly to believe the Scripture to be the word of God*, and what is the ground and reason of our so doing; or, what it is to believe the Scripture to be the word of God, as we are required to believe it so to be in a way of duty:

II. That there are *external arguments* of the divine original of the Scripture, which are effectual motives to persuade us to give an unfeigned assent thereunto:

III. That yet, moreover, God requires of us that we believe them to be his word *with faith divine, supernatural, and infallible:*

IV. *Evidence* the grounds and reasons whereon we do so believe, and ought so to do.

Unto these heads most of what ensues in the first part of this discourse may be reduced.

It is meet that we should clear the foundation whereon we build, and the principles whereon we do proceed, that what we design to prove may be the better understood by all sorts of persons, whose edification we intend; for these things are the equal concernment of

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the learned and unlearned. Wherefore, some things must be insisted on which are generally known and granted; and our first inquiry is, What it is to believe the Scripture to be the word of God with faith divine and supernatural, according as it is our duty so to do.

1. And in our *believing*, or our faith, two things are to be considered:—(1.) *What* it is that we do believe; and, (2.) *Wherefore* we do so believe it. The first is the material object of our faith,—namely, the things which we do believe; the latter, the formal object of it, or the cause and reason why we do believe them. And these things are distinct. The material object of our faith is the things revealed in the Scripture, declared unto us in propositions of truth; for things must be so proposed unto us, or we cannot believe them. That God is one in three persons, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and the like propositions of truth, are the material object of our faith, or the things that we do believe; and the reason why we do believe them is, because they are proposed in the Scripture. Thus the apostle expresseth the whole of what we intend: 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Christ's death, and burial, and resurrection, are the things proposed unto us to be believed, and so the object of our faith; but the reason why we believe them is, because they are declared in the Scriptures: see Acts viii. 28–38. Sometimes, indeed, this expression of "believing the Scriptures," by a metonymy, denotes both the formal and material objects of our faith, the Scriptures themselves as such, and the things contained in them: so John ii. 22, "They believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus said;" or the things delivered in the Scripture and farther declared by Christ, which before they understood not. And they did so believe what was declared in the Scriptures because it was so declared in them. Both are intended in the same expression, "They believed the Scripture," under various considerations. So Acts xxvi. 27. The material object of our faith, therefore, are the articles of our creed, by whose enumeration we answer unto that question, "What do we believe?" giving an account of the hope that is in us, as the apostle doth, Acts xxvi. 22, 23. But if, moreover, we are asked a reason of our faith or hope, or why we believe the things we do profess, as God to be one in three persons, Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, we do not answer, "Because so it is, for this is that which we believe," which were senseless; but we must give some other answer unto that inquiry, whether it be made by others or ourselves. The proper answer unto this question contains the formal reason and object of our faith, that which it rests upon and is resolved into; and this is that which we look after.

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2. We do not, in this inquiry, intend any kind of persuasion or faith but that which is *divine* and *infallible;* both which it is from its formal reason or objective cause. Men may be able to give some kind of reasons why they believe what they profess so to do, that will not suffice or abide the trial in this case, although they themselves may rest in them. Some, it may be, can give no other account hereof but that they have been so instructed by them whom they have *sufficient reason* to give credit unto, or that they have so received them by tradition from their fathers. Now, whatever persuasion these reasons may beget in the minds of men that the things which they profess to believe are true, yet if they are alone, it is not divine faith whereby they do believe, but that which is merely human, as being resolved into human testimony only, or an opinion on probable arguments; for no faith can be of any other kind than is the evidence it reflects on or ariseth from. I say it is so where they are alone; for I doubt not but that some who have never farther considered the reason of their believing than the teaching of their instructors have yet that evidence in their own souls of the truth and authority of God in what they believe that with respect thereunto their faith is divine and supernatural. The faith of most hath a beginning and progress not unlike that of the Samaritans, John iv. 40–42, as shall be afterwards declared.

3. When we inquire after faith that is infallible, or believing infallibly,—which, as we shall show hereafter, is necessary in this case, —we do not intend an *inherent quality* in the subject, as though he that believes with faith infallible must himself also be infallible; much less do we speak of infallibility absolutely, which is a property of God, who alone, from the perfection of his nature, can neither deceive nor be deceived: but it is that property or adjunct of the assent of our minds unto divine truths or supernatural revelations, whereby it is differenced from all other kinds of assent whatever. And this it hath from its formal object, or the evidence whereon we give this assent; for the nature of every assent is given unto it by the nature of the evidence which it proceedeth from or relieth on. This in divine faith is divine revelation; which, being infallible, renders the faith that rests on it and is resolved into it infallible also. No man can believe that which is false, or which may be false, with divine faith; for that which renders it divine is the divine truth and infallibility of the ground and evidence which it is built upon: but a man may believe that which is true infallibly so, and yet his faith not be infallible. That the Scripture is the word of God is infallibly true, yet the faith whereby a man believes it so to be may be fallible; for it is such as his evidence is, and no other. He may believe it to be so on tradition, or the testimony of the church of Rome only, or

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on outward arguments; all which being fallible, his faith is so also, although the things he assents unto be infallibly true. Wherefore, unto this faith divine and infallible it is not required that the person in whom it is be infallible, nor is it enough that the thing itself believed be infallibly true, but, moreover, that the evidence whereon he doth believe it be infallible also. So it was with them who received divine revelations immediately from God. It was not enough that the things revealed unto them were infallibly true, but they were to have infallible evidence of the revelation itself; then was their faith infallible, though their persons were fallible. With this faith, then, a man can believe nothing but what is divinely true, and therefore it is infallible; and the reason is, because God's veracity, who is the God of truth, is the only object of it (hence saith the prophet, הַאֲמִינוּ בַּיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְתֵאָמֵנוּ, 2 Chron. xx. 20,—"Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established"); or that faith which is in God and his word is *fixed on truth*, or is infallible. Hence the inquiry in this case is, What is the reason why we believe any thing with this faith divine or supernatural? or, What is it the believing whereof makes our faith divine, infallible, and supernatural? Wherefore,—

4. The *authority* and *veracity* of God revealing the material object of our faith, or what it is our duty to believe, are the formal object and reason of our faith, from whence it ariseth and whereinto it is ultimately resolved;—that is, the only reason why we do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that God is one single essence subsisting in three persons, is because that God who is truth, the "God of truth," Deut. xxxii. 4, who "cannot lie," Tit. i. 2, and whose "word is truth," John xvii. 17, and the Spirit which gave it out is "truth," 1 John v. 6, hath revealed these things to be so. And our believing these things on that ground renders our faith *divine and supernatural;* supposing also a respect unto the subjective efficiency of the Holy Ghost inspiring it into our minds, whereof afterwards: or, to speak distinctly, our faith is *supernatural*, with respect unto the production of it in our minds by the Holy Ghost; and *infallible*, with respect unto the formal reason ot it, which is divine revelation; and is *divine*, in opposition unto what is merely human, on both accounts.

As things are proposed unto us to be believed as true, faith in its assent respects only the truth or veracity of God; but whereas this faith is required of us in a way of obedience, and is considered not only physically, in its nature, but morally also, as our duty, it respects also the authority of God, which I therefore join with the truth of God as the formal reason of our faith: see 2 Sam. vii. 28. And these things the Scripture pleads and argues when faith is required of us

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in the way of obedience. "Thus saith the LORD," is that which is proposed unto us as the reason why we should believe what is spoken, whereunto oftentimes other divine names and titles are added, signifying his authority who requires us to believe: "Thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel," Isa. xxx. 15; "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," chap. lvii. 15; "Believe in the LORD your God," 2 Chron. xx. 20. "The word of the LORD" precedeth most revelations in the prophets, and other reason why we should believe the Scripture proposeth none, Heb. i. 1, 2; yea, the interposition of any other authority between the things to be believed and our souls and consciences, besides the authority of God, overthrows the nature of divine faith;—I do not say the interposition of any other means *whereby* we should believe, of which sort God hath appointed many, but the interposition of any other *authority* upon which we should believe, as that pretended in and by the church of Rome. No men can be lords of our faith, though they may be "helpers of our joy."

5. The *authority and truth* of God, considered in themselves absolutely, are not the immediate *formal* object of our faith, though they are the *ultimate* whereinto it is resolved; for we can believe nothing on their account unless it be *evidenced* unto us, and this evidence of them is in that revelation which God is pleased to make of himself, for that is the only means whereby our consciences and minds are affected with his truth and authority. We do, therefore, no otherwise rest on the truth and veracity of God in any thing than we rest on the revelation which he makes unto us, for that is the only way whereby we are affected with them; not "The LORD is true" absolutely, but, "Thus saith the LORD," and, "The LORD hath spoken," is that which we have immediate regard unto. Hereby alone are our minds affected with the authority and veracity of God; and by what way soever it is made unto us, it is sufficient and able so to affect us. At first, as hath been showed, it was given immediately to some persons, and preserved for the use of others in an oral ministry; but now all revelation, as hath also been declared, is contained in the Scriptures only.

6. It follows that our faith, whereby we believe any divine, supernatural truth, is resolved into the Scripture, as the only means of divine revelation, affecting our minds and consciences with the authority and truth of God; or, the Scripture, as the only immediate, divine, infallible revelation of the mind and will of God, is the first immediate formal object of our faith, the sole reason why and ground whereon we do believe the things that are revealed with faith divine, supernatural, and infallible. We do believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. Why do we so do? on what ground or reason? It is because of the authority of God commanding us so to do, and the

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truth of God testifying thereunto. But how or by what means are our minds and consciences affected with the authority and truth of God, so as to believe with respect unto them, which makes our faith divine and supernatural? It is alone the divine, supernatural, infallible revelation that he hath made of this sacred truth, and of his will that we should believe it. But what is this revelation, or where is it to be found? It is the Scripture alone, which contains the entire revelation that God hath made of himself, in all things which he will have us to believe or do. Hence,—

7. The last inquiry ariseth, *How,* or *on what grounds,* for *what reasons,* do we believe the Scripture to be a divine revelation, proceeding immediately from God, or to be that word of God which is truth divine and infallible? Whereunto we answer, It is *solely* on the evidence that the Spirit of God, in and by the Scripture itself, gives unto us that it was given by immediate inspiration from God; or, the ground and reason whereon we believe the Scripture to be the word of God are the authority and truth of God evidencing themselves in and by it unto the minds and consciences of men. Hereon, as, whatever we assent unto as proposed in the Scripture, our faith rests on and is resolved into the veracity and faithfulness of God, so is it also in this of believing the Scripture itself to be the infallible word of God, seeing we do it on *no other* grounds but its *own evidence* that so it is.

This is that which is principally to be proved, and therefore to prepare for it and to remove prejudices, something is to be spoken to prepare the way thereunto.

CHAPTER III.

Sundry convincing external arguments for divine revelation.

THERE are sundry cogent arguments, which are taken from *external considerations* of the Scripture, that evince it on rational grounds to be from God. All these are motives of credibility, or effectual persuasives to account and esteem it to be the word of God. And although they neither are, nor is it possible they ever should be, the ground and reason whereon we believe it so to be with faith divine and supernatural, yet are they necessary unto the confirmation of our faith herein against temptations, oppositions, and objections. These arguments have been pleaded by many, and that usefully, and therefore it is not needful for me to insist upon them; and they are the same, for the substance of them, in ancient and modern writers, however managed by some with more learning, dexterity, and force of reasoning than by others. It may not be expected,

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therefore, that in this short discourse, designed unto another purpose, I should give them much improvement. However, I shall a little touch on those which seem to be most cogent, and that in them wherein, in my apprehension, their strength doth lie; and I shall do this to manifest that although we plead that no man can believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, with faith divine, supernatural, and infallible, but upon its own internal divine evidence and efficacy, yet we allow and make use of all those external arguments of its sacred truth and divine original which are pleaded by others, ascribing unto them as much weight and cogency as they can do, acknowledging the persuasion which they beget and effect to be as firm as they can pretend it to be. Only, we do not judge them to contain the whole of the evidence which we have for faith to rest on or to be resolved into; yea, not that at all which renders it divine, supernatural, and infallible. The rational arguments, we say, which are or may be used in this matter, with the human testimonies whereby they are corroborated, may and ought to be made use of and insisted on. And it is but vainly pretended that their use is superseded by our other assertions, as though, where faith is required, all the subservient use of reason were absolutely discarded, and our faith thereby rendered irrational. And the assent unto the divine original and authority of the Scriptures, which the mind ought to give upon them, we grant to be of as high a nature as it is pretended to be,—namely, a moral certainty. Moreover, the conclusion which unprejudiced reason will make upon these arguments is more firm, better grounded, and more pleadable, than that which is built merely on the sole authority of any church whatever. But this we assert, that there is an assent of another kind unto the divine original and authority of the Scriptures required of us,—namely, that of faith divine and supernatural. Of this none will say that it can be effected by or resolved into the best and most cogent of rational arguments and external testimonies which are absolutely human and fallible; for it doth imply a contradiction, to believe infallibly upon fallible evidence. Wherefore I shall prove, that beyond all these arguments and their effect upon our minds, there is an assent unto the Scripture as the word of God required of us with faith divine, supernatural, and infallible; and, therefore, there must be a divine evidence which is the formal object and reason of it, which alone it rests on and is resolved into, which shall also be declared and proved. But yet, as was said in the first place, because their property is to level the ground, and to remove the rubbish of objections out of the way, that we may build the safer on the sure foundation, I shall mention some of those which I esteem justly pleadable in this cause; and,—

1. The *antiquity* of these writings, and of the divine revelation contained in them, is pleaded in evidence of their divine original,

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and it may be so deservedly, for where it is absolute it is unquestionable; that which is most ancient in any kind is most true. God himself makes use of this plea against idols: Isa. xliii. 10–12, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD. I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have showed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God." That which he asserts is, that he alone is God, and no other: this he calls the people to testify by this argument, that he was among them as God,—that is, in the church,—before any strange god was known or named. And so it is justly pleaded in behalf of this revelation of the mind of God in the Scripture,—it was in the world long before any other thing or writing pretended to be given unto the same end. Whatever, therefore, ensued with the like design must either be set up in competition with it or opposition unto it, above which it hath its advantage merely from its antiquity. Whereas, therefore, this writing, in the first books of it, is acknowledged to be ancienter than any other that is extant in the world, or indeed that ever was so, and may be proved so to be, it is beyond all reasonable apprehension that it should be of human original; for we know how low, weak, and imperfect, all human inventions were at the first, how rude and unpolished in every kind, until time, observation, following additions and diminutions, had shaped, formed, and improved them. But this writing coming forth in the world absolutely the first in its kind, directing us in the knowledge of God and ourselves, was at first and at once so absolutely complete and perfect, that no art, industry, or wisdom of man, could ever yet find any just defect in it, or was able to add any thing unto it whereby it might be bettered or improved. Neither from the beginning would it ever admit of any additions unto it, but what came from the same fountain of divine revelation and inspiration, clearing itself, in all ages, from all addition and superfetation of men whatever. This at least puts a singular character upon this book, and represents it with such reverend awe and majesty that it is the highest petulancy not to pay it a sacred respect.

This argument is pursued by many at large, as that which affordeth a great variety of historical and chronological observations; and it hath been so scanned and improved that nothing but the giving of it a new dress remains for present or future diligence. But the real force of it lies in the consideration of the people by and amongst whom this revelation first commenced in the world, and the time wherein it did so. When some nations had so improved and cultivated the light of nature as greatly to excel others in wisdom and knowledge, they generally looked upon the people of the Jews as ignorant and barbarous; and the more wise any of them conceived

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themselves, the more they despised them. And, indeed, they were utter strangers unto all those arts and sciences whereby the faculties of men's minds are naturally enlightened and enlarged; nor did they pretend unto any wisdom whereby to stand in competition with other nations, but only what they received by divine revelations. This alone God himself had taught them to look upon and esteem as their only wisdom before all the world, Deut. iv. 6–8. Now, we shall not need to consider what were the first attempts of other nations in expressing their conceptions concerning things divine, the duty and happiness of man. The Egyptians and Grecians were those who vied for reputation in the improvement of this wisdom; but it is known and confessed that the utmost production of their endeavours were things foolish, irrational, and absurd, contrary to the being and providence of God, and to the light of nature, leading mankind into a maze of folly and wickedness. But we may consider what they attained unto in the fulness of time by their utmost improvement of science, wisdom, mutual intelligence, experience, communication, laborious study, and observation. When they had added and subducted to and from the inventions of all former ages from time immemorial,—when they had used and improved the reason, wisdom, invention, and conjectures, of all that went before them in the study of this wisdom; and had discarded whatever they had found by experience unsuited to natural light and the common reason of mankind,—yet it must be acknowledged that the apostle passeth a just censure on the utmost of their attainments, namely, that "they waxed vain in their imaginations," and that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Whence, then, was it that in one nation esteemed barbarous, and really so with respect unto that wisdom, those arts and sciences, which ennobled other nations; from that antiquity wherein it is not pretended that reason and wisdom had received any considerable improvement; without converse, communication, learning, or experience,—there should at once proceed such a law, doctrine, and instructions concerning God and man, so stable, certain, uniform, as should not only incomparably excel all products of human wisdom unto that purpose, however advantaged by time and experience, but also abide invariable throughout all generations, so as that whatever hath been advanced in opposition unto it, or but differing from it, hath quickly sunk under the weight of its own unreasonableness and folly? This one consideration, unless men have a mind to be contentious, gives sufficient satisfaction that this book could have no other original but what it pleads for itself,—namely, an immediate emanation from God.

2. It is apparent that God in all ages hath had a great regard unto it, and acted his power and care in its preservation. Were not

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the Bible what it pretends to be, there had been nothing more suitable to the nature of God, and more becoming divine providence, than long since to have blotted it out of the world; for to suffer a book to be in the world from the "beginning of times," falsely pretending his name and authority, seducing so great a portion of mankind into a pernicious and ruinous apostasy from him, as it must do and doth if it be not of a divine original, and exposing inconceivable multitudes of the best, wisest, and soberest among them, unto all sorts of bloody miseries, which they have undergone in the behalf of it, seems not consonant unto that infinite goodness, wisdom, and care, wherewith this world is governed from above. But, on the contrary, whereas the malicious craft of Satan and the prevalent power and rage of mankind have combined and been set at work to the ruin and utter suppression of this book, proceeding sometimes so far as that there was no appearing way for its escape; yet, through the watchful care and providence of God, sometimes putting itself forth in *miraculous instances*, it hath been preserved unto this day, and shall be so to the consummation of all things. The event of that which was spoken by our Saviour, Matt. v. 18, doth invincibly prove the divine approbation of this book, as that doth its divine original, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." God's perpetual care over the Scripture for so many ages, that not a letter of it should be utterly lost, nothing that hath the least tendency towards its end should perish, is evidence sufficient of his regard unto it. Especially would it be so if we should consider with what remarkable judgments and severe reflections of vengeance on its opposers this care hath been managed, instances whereof might easily be multiplied. And if any will not ascribe this preservation of the books of the Bible, not only in their being, but in their purity and integrity, free from the least just suspicion of corruption, or the intermixture of any thing human or heterogeneous, unto the care of God, it is incumbent on him to assign some other cause proportionate to such an effect, whilst it was the interest of heaven and the endeavour of earth and hell to have it corrupted and destroyed. For my part, I cannot but judge that he that seeth not an hand of divine Providence stretched out in the preservation of this book and all that is in it, its words and syllables, for thousands of years, through all the overthrows and deluges of calamities that have befallen the world, with the weakness of the means whereby it hath been preserved, and the interest, in some ages, of all those in whose power it was to have it corrupted,—as it was of the apostate churches of the Jews and Christians,—with the open opposition that hath been made unto it, doth not believe there is any such thing as divine providence at all. It was first written in

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the very infancy of the *Babylonian* empire, with which it afterwards contemporized about nine hundred years. By this monarchy, that people *which alone had these oracles of God committed to them* were oppressed, destroyed, and carried into captivity; but this book was then preserved amongst them whilst they were absolutely under the power of their enemies, although it condemned them and all their gods and religious worship, wherewith we know how horribly mankind is enraged. Satan had enthroned himself as the object of their worship, and the author of all ways of divine veneration amongst them. These they adhered unto as their principal interest; as all people do unto that they esteem their religion. In the whole world there was nothing that judged, condemned, opposed him or them, but this book only, which was now absolutely in their power. If that by any means could have been destroyed, then when it was in the hands of but a few, and those for the most part flagitious in their lives, hating the things contained in it, and wholly under the power of their adversaries, the interest of Satan and the whole world in idolatry had been secured. But, through the mere provision of divine care, it outlived that monarchy, and saw the ruin of its greatest adversaries. So it did also during the continuance of the *Persian* monarchy, which succeeded, whilst the people was still under the power of idolaters; against whom this was the only testimony in the world. By some branches of the *Grecian* monarchy a most fierce and diligent attempt was made to have utterly destroyed it; but still it was snatched by divine power out of the furnace, not one hair of it being singed, or the least detriment brought unto its perfection. The *Romans* destroyed both the people and place designed until then for its preservation, carrying the ancient copy of the law in triumph to Rome, on the conquest of Jerusalem; and whilst all absolute power and dominion in the whole world, where this book was known or heard of, was in their hands, they exercised a rage against it for sundry ages, with the same success that former enemies had. From the very first, all the endeavours of mankind that professed an open enmity against it have been utterly frustrated. And whereas, also, those unto whom it was outwardly committed, as the Jews first, and the *antichristian* church of apostatized Christians afterwards, not only fell into opinions and practices absolutely inconsistent with it, but also built all their present and future interests on those opinions and practices; yet none of them durst ever attempt the corrupting of one line in it, but were forced to attempt their own security by a pretence of *additional traditions*, and keeping the book itself, as much as they durst, out of the hands and knowledge of all not engaged in the same interest with themselves. Whence could all this proceed but from the watchful care and power of divine Providence? And

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it is brutish folly not to believe that what God doth so protect did originally proceed from himself, seeing it pleads and pretends so to do; for every wise man will take more care of a stranger than a bastard falsely imposed on him unto his dishonour.

3. The *design of the whole*, and all the parts of it, hath an impress on it of divine wisdom and authority: and hereof there are two parts; first, To reveal God unto men; and, secondly, To direct men to come unto the enjoyment of God. That these are the only two great concerns of our nature, of any rational being, were easy to prove, but that it is acknowledged by all those with whom I treat. Now, never did any book or writing in the world, any single or joint endeavours of mankind or invisible spirits, in the way of authority, give out a law, rule, guide, and light for all mankind universally in both these,—namely, the knowledge of God and ourselves,—but this book only; and if any other, it may be, like the Alcoran, did pretend in the least thereunto, it quickly discovered its own folly, and exposed itself to the contempt of all wise and considerate men. The only question is, how it hath discharged itself in this design? for if it have completely and perfectly accomplished it, it is not only evident that it must be from God, but also that it is the greatest benefit and kindness that divine benignity and goodness ever granted unto mankind; for without it all men universally must necessarily wander in an endless maze of uncertainties, without ever attaining light, rest, or blessedness, here or hereafter. Wherefore,—

(1.) As it takes on itself to speak in *the name and authority of God*, and delivers nothing, commands nothing, but what becomes his infinite holiness, wisdom, and goodness; so it makes that declaration of him, in his nature, being, and subsistence, with the necessary properties and acts thereof, his will, with all his voluntary actings or works, wherein we may be or are concerned, so as that we may know him aright, and entertain true notions and apprehensions of him, according to the utmost capacity of our finite, limited understanding. Neither do we urge his authority in this case, but here and elsewhere resort unto the evidence of his reasonings, compared with the event or matter of fact. What horrible darkness, ignorance, and blindness, was upon the whole world with respect unto the knowledge of God, what confusion and debasement of our nature ensued thereon, whilst God "suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, and winked at the times of their ignorance," the apostle declares at large, Rom. i., from the 18th verse to the end of the chapter. The sum is, That the only true God being become unknown to them, as the wisest of them acknowledged, Acts xvii. 23, and as our apostle proved against them, the devil, that murderer from the beginning, and enemy of mankind, had, under various pretences, substituted

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himself in his room, and was become "the god of this world," as he is called, 2 Cor. iv. 4, and had appropriated all the religious devotion and worship of the generality of mankind unto himself; for "the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and not to God," as our apostle affirms, 1 Cor. x. 20, and as may easily be evinced, and I have abundantly manifested it elsewhere.[1] It is acknowledged that some few speculative men among the heathen did seek after God in that horrid darkness wherewith they were encompassed, and laboured to reduce their conceptions and notions of his being unto what reason could apprehend of infinite perfections, and what the works of creation and providence could suggest unto them;—but as they never could come unto any certainty or consistency of notions in their own minds, proceeding but a little beyond conjecture (as is the manner of them who seek after any thing in the dark), much less with one another, to propose any thing unto the world for the use of mankind in these things by common consent; so they could none of them either ever free themselves from the grossest practical idolatry in worshipping the devil, the head of their apostasy from God, or in the least influence the minds of the generality of mankind with any due apprehensions of the divine nature. This is the subject and substance of the apostle's disputation against them, Rom. i. In this state of things, what misery and confusion the world lived in for many ages, what an endless labyrinth of foolish, slavish superstitions and idolatries it had cast itself into, I have in another discourse particularly declared.[2] With respect hereunto the Scripture is well called by the apostle Peter "a light shining in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19. It gives unto all men at once a perfect, clear, steady, uniform declaration of God, his being, subsistence, properties, authority, rule, and actings; which evidenceth itself unto the minds and consciences of all whom the god of this world hath not absolutely blinded by the power of prejudices and lusts, confirming them in an enmity unto and hatred of God himself. There is, indeed, no more required to free mankind from this horrible darkness, and enormous conceptions about the nature of God and the worship of idols, but a sedate, unprejudiced consideration of the revelation of these things in the books of the Scripture. We may say, therefore, to all the world, with our prophet, "When they say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 19, 20. And this, also, plainly manifests the Scrip-

[1] Theologoumena, etc., lib. ii. cap. 1, sect. 11.
[2] Ubi supra, lib. iii. cap. 3, de origine et progressu idololatriæ.

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ture to be of a *divine original:* for if this declaration of God, this revelation of himself and his will, is incomparably the greatest and most excellent benefit that our nature is capable of in this world, more needful for and more useful unto mankind than the sun in the firmament, as to the proper end of their lives and beings; and if none of the wisest men in the world, neither severally nor jointly, could attain unto themselves or make known unto others this knowledge of God, so that we may say with our apostle, that "in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. 21; and whereas those who attempted any such things yet "waxed vain in their imaginations" and conjectures, so that no one person in the world dares own the regulation of his mind and understanding by their notions and conceptions absolutely, although they had all advantages of wisdom and the exercise of reason above those, at least the most of them, who wrote and published the books of the Scripture;—it cannot, with any pretence of reason, be questioned whether they were given by inspiration from God, as they pretend and plead. There is that done in them which all the world could not do, and without the doing whereof all the world must have been eternally miserable; and who could do this but God? If any one shall judge that that ignorance of God which was among the heathens of old, or is among the Indians at this day, is not so miserable a matter as we make it, or that there is any way to free them from it but by an emanation of light from the Scripture, he dwells out of my present way, upon the confines of atheism, so that I shall not divert unto any converse with him. I shall only add, that whatever notions of truth concerning God and his essence there may be found in those philosophers who lived after the preaching of the gospel in the world, or are at this day to be found among the Mohammedans or other false worshippers in the world, above those of the more ancient Pagans, they all derive from the fountain of the Scripture, and were thence by various means traduced.

(2.) The second end of this doctrine is, to *direct mankind in their proper course of living unto God,* and attaining that rest and blessedness whereof they are capable, and which they cannot but desire. These things are necessary to our nature, so that without them it were better not to be; for it is better to have no being in the world, than, whilst we have it, always to wander, and never to act towards its proper end, seeing all that is really good unto us consists in our tendency thereunto and our attainment of it. Now, as these things were never stated in the minds of the community of mankind, but that they lived in perpetual confusion; so the inquiries of the philosophers about the chief end of man, the nature of felicity or blessedness, the way of attaining it, are nothing but so many uncertain and

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fierce digladiations, wherein not any one truth is asserted nor any one duty prescribed that is not spoiled and vitiated by its circumstances and ends. Besides, they never rose up so much as to a surmise of or about the most important matters of religion; without which it is demonstrable by reason that it is impossible we should ever attain the end for which we were made, or the blessedness whereof we are capable. No account could they ever give of our apostasy from God, of the depravation of our nature,—of the cause, or necessary cure of it. In this lost and wandering condition of mankind, the Scripture presenteth itself as a light, rule, and guide unto all, to direct them in their whole course unto their end, and to bring them unto the enjoyment of God; and this it doth with such clearness and evidence as to dispel all the darkness and put an end unto all the confusion of the minds of men (as the sun with rising doth the shades of the night), unless they wilfully shut their eyes against it, "loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil:" for all the confusion of the minds of men, to extricate themselves from whence they found out and immixed themselves in endless questions to no purpose, arose from their ignorance of what we were originally, of what we now are, and how we came so to be, by what way or means we may be delivered or relieved, what are the duties of life, or what is required of us in order to our living to God as our chiefest end, and wherein the blessedness of our nature doth consist. All the world was never able to give an answer tolerably satisfactory unto any one of these inquiries, and yet, unless they are all infallibly determined, we are not capable of the least rest or happiness above the beasts that perish. But now all these things are so clearly declared and stated in the Scripture that it comes with an evidence like a light from heaven on the minds and consciences of unprejudiced persons. What was the condition of our nature in its first creation and constitution, with the blessedness and advantage of that condition; how we fell from it, and what was the cause, what is the nature, and what the consequences and effects, of our present depravation and apostasy from God; how help and relief is provided for us herein by infinite wisdom, grace, and bounty; what that help is, how we may be interested in it and made partakers of it; what is that system of duties, or course of obedience unto God, which is required of us, and wherein our eternal felicity doth consist,—are all of them so plainly and clearly revealed in the Scripture, as in general to leave mankind no ground for doubt, inquiry, or conjecture. Set aside inveterate prejudices from tradition, education, false notions, into the mould whereof the mind is cast, the love of sin, and the conduct of lust,—which things have an inconceivable power over the minds, souls, and affections of men,—and the light of the Scripture in these things is

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like that of the sun at noon-day, which shuts up the way unto all farther inquiry, and efficaciously necessitates unto an acquiescency in it. And, in particular, in that direction which it gives unto the lives of men, in order unto that obedience which they owe to God, and that reward which they expect from him, there is no instance conceivable of any thing conducing thereunto which is not prescribed therein, nor of any thing which is contrary unto it that falls not under its prohibition. Those, therefore, whose desire or interest it is that the bounds and differences of good and evil should be unfixed and confounded; who are afraid to know what they were, what they are, or what they shall come unto; who care to know neither God nor themselves, their duty nor their reward,—may despise this book, and deny its divine original: others will retain a sacred veneration of it, as of the offspring of God.

4. The *testimony of the church* may in like manner be pleaded unto the same purpose. And I shall also insist upon it, partly to manifest wherein its true nature and efficacy do consist, and partly to evince the vanity of the old pretence, that even we also, who are departed from the church of Rome, do receive the Scripture upon the authority thereof; whence it is farther pretended, that, on the same ground and reason, we ought to receive whatever else it proposeth unto us.

(1.) The church is said to be the *pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. iii. 15; which is the only text pleaded with any sobriety to give countenance unto the assertion of the authority of the Scripture with respect unto us to depend on the authority of the church. But the weakness of a plea to that purpose from hence hath been so fully manifested by many already that it needs no more to be insisted on. In short, it cannot be so the pillar and ground of truth that the truth should be, as it were, built and rest upon it as its foundation; for this is directly contrary to the same apostle, who teacheth us that the church itself is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone," Eph. ii. 20. The church cannot be the ground of truth, and truth the ground of the church, in the same sense or kind. Wherefore, the church is the pillar and ground of truth, in that it holds up and declares the Scriptures and the things contained therein so to be.

(2.) In receiving any thing from a church, we may consider the *authority* of it, or its *ministry*. By the authority of the church in this matter, we intend no more but the weight and importance that is in its testimony; as testimonies do vary according to the worth, gravity, honesty, honour, and reputation of them by whom they are given: for to suppose an authority, properly so called, in any church, or all the churches of the world, whereon our reception of the Scrip-

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ture should depend, as that which gives it authority towards us, and a sufficient warranty to our faith, is a nice imagination; for the authority and truth of God stand not in need nor are capable of any such attestation from men. All they will admit of from the children of men is, that they do humbly submit unto them, and testify their so doing with the reasons of it. The ministry of the church in this matter is that duty of the church whereby it proposeth and declareth the Scripture to be the word of God, and that as it hath occasion, to all the world. And this ministry also may be considered either formally, as it is appointed of God unto this end, and blessed by him; or materially only, as the thing is done, though the grounds whereon it is done and the manner of doing it be not divinely approved.

We wholly deny that we receive the Scripture, or ever did, on the authority of the church of Rome, in any sense whatever, for the reasons that shall be mentioned immediately. But it may be granted that, together with the ministry of other churches in the world, and many other providential means of their preservation and successive communication, we did *de facto* receive the Scriptures by the ministry of the church of Rome also, seeing they also were in the possession of them; but this ministry we allow only in the latter sense, as an actual means in subserviency unto God's providence, without respect unto any especial institution.

And for the authority of the church in this case, in that sense wherein it is allowed,—namely, as denoting the weight and importance of a testimony, which, being strengthened by all sorts of circumstances, may be said to have great authority in it,—we must be careful unto whom or what church we grant or allow it: for let men assume what names or titles to themselves they please, yet if the generality of them be corrupt or flagitious in their lives, and have great secular advantages, which they highly prize and studiously improve, from what they suppose and profess the Scripture to supply them withal, be they called church or what you please, their testimony therein is of very little value, for all men may see that they have an earthly worldly, interest of their own therein; and it will be said that if such persons did know the whole Bible to be a fable (as one pope expressed himself to that purpose), they would not forego the profession of it, unless they could more advantage themselves in the world another way. Wherefore, whereas it is manifest unto all that those who have the conduct of the Roman church have made, and do make to themselves, great earthly, temporal advantages, in honour, power, wealth, and reputation in the world, by their profession of the Scripture, their testimony may rationally be supposed to be so far influenced by self-interest as to be of little validity.

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The testimony, therefore, which I intend is that of multitudes of persons of unspotted reputation on all other accounts in the world, free from all possibility of impeachment, as unto any designed evil or conspiracy among themselves, with respect unto any corrupt end, and who, having not the least secular advantage by what they testified unto, were absolutely secured against all exceptions which either common reason or common usage among mankind can put in unto any witness whatever. And, to evidence the force that is in this consideration, I shall briefly represent, [1.] *Who* they were that gave and do give this *testimony*, in some especial instances; [2.] *What* they gave this *testimony* unto; [3.] *How*, or by what means, they did so:—

[1.] And, in the first place, the testimony of those by whom the several books of the Scripture were written is to be considered. They all of them, severally and jointly, witnessed that *what* they wrote was received by *inspiration from God*. This is pleaded by the apostle Peter in the name of them all: 2 Pet. i. 16–21, "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This is the concurrent testimony of the writers both of the Old Testament and the New,—namely, that as they had certain knowledge of the things they wrote, so their writing was by inspiration from God. So, in particular, John beareth witness unto his Revelation: chap. xix. 9, xxii. 6, "These are the true and faithful sayings of God." And what weight is to be laid hereon is declared, John xxi. 24, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true." He testified to the truth of what he wrote; but how was it known to the church, there intended, ("*We* know that his testimony is true,") that so it was indeed? He was not absolutely *αὐτόπιστος*, or "one that was to be believed in merely on his own account;" yet here it is spoken in the name of the church with the highest assurance, "We know that his testimony is true." I answer, This assurance of theirs did not arise merely from his moral

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or natural endowments or holy counsels, but from the evidence they had of his divine inspiration; whereof we shall treat afterward.

The things pleaded to give force unto this testimony, in particular, are all that such a testimony is capable of, and so many as would require a large discourse by itself to propose, discuss, and confirm them. But supposing the testimony they gave, I shall, in compliance with my own design, reduce the evidences of its truth unto these two considerations: 1*st.* Of their *persons;* and, 2*dly.* Of the *manner* of their writing:—

1*st.* As to their *persons*, they were absolutely removed from all possible suspicion of deceiving or being deceived. The wit of all the atheistical spirits in the world is not able to fix on any one thing that would be a tolerable ground of any such suspicion concerning the integrity of witnesses, could such a testimony be given in any other case; and surmises in things of this nature, which have no pleadable ground for them, are to be looked on as diabolical suggestions or atheistical dreams, or at best the false imaginations of weak and distempered minds. The nature and design of their work; their unconcernment with all secular interests; their unacquaintance with one another; the times and places wherein the things reported by them were done and acted; the facility of convincing them of falsehood if what they wrote in matter of fact, which is the fountain of what else they taught, were not true; the evident certainty that this would have been done, arising from the known desire, ability, will, and interest, of their adversaries so to do, had it been possible to be effected, seeing this would have secured them the victory in the conflicts wherein they were violently engaged, and have put an immediate issue unto all that difference and uproar that was in the world about their doctrine; their harmony among themselves, without conspiracy or antecedent agreement; the miseries which they underwent, most of them without hope of relief or recompense in this world, upon the sole account of the doctrine taught by themselves; with all other circumstances innumerable, that are pleadable to evince the sincerity and integrity of any witnesses whatever,—do all concur to prove that they did not follow cunningly-devised fables in what they declared concerning the mind and will of God as immediately from himself. To confront this evidence with bare surmises, incapable of any rational countenance or confirmation, is only to manifest what brutish impudence, infidelity, and atheism, are forced to retreat unto for shelter.

2*dly.* Their *style* or *manner* of writing deserves a peculiar consideration; for there are impressed on it all those characters of a divine original that can be communicated unto such an outward *adjunct of divine revelation.* Notwithstanding the distance of the ages and

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seasons wherein they lived, the difference of the languages wherein they wrote, with the great variety of their parts, abilities, education, and other circumstances, yet there is upon the whole and all the parts of their writing such gravity, majesty, and authority, mixed with plainness of speech, and absolute freedom from all appearance of affectation of esteem or applause, or any thing else that derives from human frailty, as must excite an admiration in all that seriously consider them. But I have at large elsewhere insisted on this consideration;[1] and have also, in the same place, showed that there is no other writing extant in the world that ever pretended unto a divine original,—as the apocryphal books under the Old Testament, and some fragments of spurious pieces pretended to be written in the days of the apostles,—but they are, not only from their matter, but from the manner of their writing, and the plain footsteps of human artifice and weakness therein, sufficient for their own conviction, and do openly discover their own vain pretensions. So must every thing necessarily do which, being merely human, pretends unto an immediate derivation from God. When men have done all they can, these things will have as evident a difference between them as there is between wheat and chaff, between real and painted fire, Jer. xxiii. 28, 29.

Unto the testimony of the divine writers themselves, we must add that of those who in all ages have *believed in Christ through their word;* which is the description which the Lord Jesus Christ giveth of his church, John xvii. 20. This is the church,—that is, those who wrote the Scripture, and those who believe in Christ through their word, through all ages,—which beareth witness to the divine original of the Scripture; and it may be added that we know this witness is true. With these I had rather venture my faith and eternal condition than with any society, any real or pretended church whatever. And among these there is an especial consideration to be had of those innumerable multitudes who, in the primitive times, witnessed this confession all the world over; for they had many advantages above us to know the certainty of sundry matters of fact which the verity of our religion depends upon. And we are directed unto an especial regard of their testimony, which is signalized by Christ himself. In the great judgment that is to be passed on the world, the first appearance is of "the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God," Rev. xx. 4; and there is at present an especial regard unto them in heaven upon the account of their witness and testimony, chap. vi. 9–11. These were they who, with the loss of their lives by the sword, and other ways of violence, gave testimony unto the truth of the word of God. And to

[1] Exercitat. on the Epist. to the Heb., Exer. i.

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reduce these things unto a natural consideration, who can have the least occasion to suspect all those persons of folly, weakness, credulity, wickedness, or conspiracy among themselves, which such a diffuse multitude was absolutely incapable of? Neither can any man undervalue their testimony but he must comply with their adversaries against them, who were known generally to be of the worst of men. And who is there that believes there is a God and an eternal future state that had not rather have his soul with Paul than Nero, with the holy martyrs than their bestial persecutors? Wherefore, this suffrage and testimony, begun from the first writing of the Scripture, and carried on by the best of men in all ages, and made conspicuously glorious in the primitive times of Christianity, must needs be with all wise men unavoidably cogent, at least unto a due and sedate consideration of what they bear witness unto, and sufficient to scatter all such prejudices as atheism or profaneness may raise or suggest.

[2.] *What* it was they gave *testimony* unto is duly to be considered; and this was, not only that the book of the Scripture was good, holy, and true, in all the contents of it, but that the whole and every part of it was given by *divine inspiration*, as their faith in this matter is expressed, 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. On this account, and no other, did they themselves receive the Scripture, as also believe and yield obedience unto the things contained in it. Neither would they admit that their testimony was received if the whole world would be content to allow of or obey the Scripture on any other or lower terms; nor will God himself allow of an assent unto the Scripture under any other conception, but as the word which is immediately spoken by himself. Hence, they who refuse to give credit thereunto are said to "belie the LORD, and say, It is not he," Jer. v. 12; yea, to "make God a liar," 1 John v. 10. If all mankind should agree together to receive and make use of this book, as that which taught nothing but what is good, useful, and profitable to human society; as that which is a complete directory unto men in all that they need to believe or do towards God; the best means under heaven to bring them to settlement, satisfaction, and assurance of the knowledge of God and themselves; as the safest guide to eternal blessedness; and therefore must needs be written and composed by persons wise, holy, and honest above all comparison, and such as had such knowledge of God and his will as is necessary unto such an undertaking;—yet all this answers not the testimony given by the church of believers in all ages unto the Scriptures. It was not lawful for them, it is not for us, so to compound this matter with the world. That the whole Scripture was given by inspiration from God, that it was his word, his true and faithful sayings, was that which, in the first place, they gave testimony unto, and we also are obliged so to do. They never

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pretended unto any other assurance of the things they professed, nor any other reason of their faith and obedience, but that the Scripture, wherein all these things are contained, was given immediately from God, or was his word; and, therefore, they were always esteemed no less traitors to Christianity who gave up their Bibles to persecutors than those who denied Jesus Christ.

[3.] The *manner wherein* this testimony was given adds to the importance of it; for,—1*st*. Many of them, especially in some seasons, gave it in, with sundry *miraculous operations*. This our apostle pleadeth as a corroboration of the witness given by the first preachers of the gospel unto the truths of it, Heb. ii. 4, as the same was done by all the apostles together, Acts v. 32. It must be granted that these miracles were not wrought immediately to confirm this single truth, that the Scripture was given by inspiration of God; but that the end of miracles is to be an immediate witness from heaven, or God's attestation to their persons and ministry by whom they were wrought. His presence with them and approbation of their doctrine were publicly declared by them. But the miracles wrought by the Lord Christ and his apostles, whereby God gave immediate testimony unto the divine mission of their persons and infallible truth of their doctrine, might either not have been written, as most of them were not, or they might have been written and their doctrine recorded in books not given by inspiration from God. Besides, as to the miracles wrought by Christ himself, and most of those of the apostles, they were wrought among them by whom the books of the Old Testament were acknowledged as the oracles of God, and before the writing of those of the New, so that they could not be wrought in the immediate confirmation of the one or the other. Neither have we any infallible testimony concerning these miracles but the Scripture itself, wherein they are recorded; whence it is necessary that we should believe the Scripture to be infallibly true, before we can believe on grounds infallible the miracles therein recorded to be so. Wherefore, I grant that the whole force of this consideration lieth in this alone, that those who gave testimony to the Scripture to be the word of God had an attestation given unto their ministry by these miraculous operations, concerning which we have good collateral security also.

2*dly*. Many of them confirmed their testimony with their *sufferings*, being not only witnesses but *martyrs*, in the peculiar *church notion* of that word, grounded on the Scripture, Acts xxii. 20; Rev. ii. 13, xvii. 6. So far were they from any worldly advantage by the profession they made and the testimony they gave, as that in the confirmation of them they willingly and cheerfully underwent whatever is evil, dreadful, or destructive to human nature, in all its tem-

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porary concerns. It is, therefore, unquestionable that they had the highest assurance of the truth in these things which the mind of man is capable of. The management of this argument is the principal design of the apostle in the whole 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews; for, having declared the nature of faith in general, namely, that it is the "substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," verse 1,—that is, such an assent unto and confidence of invisible things, things capable of no demonstration from sense or reason, as respects divine revelation only, whereinto alone it is resolved,—for our encouragement thereunto and establishment therein, he produceth a long catalogue of those who did, suffered, and obtained great things thereby. That which he principally insists upon is, the hardships, miseries, cruelties, tortures, and several sorts of deaths, which they underwent, especially from verse 33 to the end. These he calleth a "cloud of witnesses," wherewith "we are compassed about," chap. xii. 1, giving testimony unto what we do believe, that is, divine revelation, and in an especial manner to the promises therein contained, unto our encouragement in the same duty, as he there declares. And certainly what was thus testified unto by so many great, wise, and holy persons, and that in such a way and manner, hath as great an outward evidence of its truth as any thing of that nature is capable of in this world.

3*dly*. They gave not their testimony *casually*, or on some *extraordinary occasion* only, or by some *one solemn act*, or in some *one certain way*, as other testimonies are given, nor can be given otherwise; but they gave their testimony in this cause in their whole course, in all that they *thought*, *spake*, or *did* in the world, and in the whole disposal of their ways, lives, and actions,—as every true believer continueth to do at this day. For a man, when he is occasionally called out, to give a *verbal testimony* unto the divine original of the Scripture, ordering in the meantime the whole course of his conversation, his hopes, designs, aims, and ends, without any eminent respect or regard unto it, his testimony is of no value, nor can have any influence on the minds of sober and considerate men. But when men do manifest and evince that the declaration of the mind of God in the Scripture hath a sovereign divine authority over their souls and consciences, absolutely and in all things, then is their witness cogent and efficacious. There is to me a thousand times more force and weight in the testimony to this purpose of some holy persons, who universally and in all things, with respect unto this world and their future eternal condition, in all their thoughts, words, actions, and ways, do really experiment in themselves, and express to others, the power and authority of this word of God in their souls and consciences, living, doing, suffering, and dying in peace, assurance of

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mind, and consolation thereon, than in the verbal declaration of the most splendid, numerous church in the world, who evidence not such an inward sense of its power and efficacy. There is, therefore, that force in the real testimony which hath been given in all ages, by all this sort of persons, not one excepted, unto the divine authority of the Scripture, that it is highly arrogant for any one to question the truth of it without evident convictions of its imposture; which no person of any tolerable sobriety did ever yet pretend unto.

5. I shall add, in the last place, the consideration of that *success* which the *doctrine* derived solely from the Scripture, and resolved thereinto, hath had in the world upon the minds and lives of men, especially upon the *first preaching* of the gospel. And two things offer themselves hereon immediately unto our consideration:—(1.) The *persons* by whom this doctrine was successfully carried on in the world; and, (2.) The *way* and *manner* of the propagation of it; both which the Scripture takes notice of in particular, as evidences of that *divine power* which the word was really accompanied withal. (1.) For the persons unto whom this work was committed, I mean the apostles and first evangelists, were, as to their outward condition in the world, poor, low, and every way despised; and as unto the endowments of their minds, destitute of all those abilities and advantages which might give them either reputation or probability of success in such an undertaking. This the Jews marked in them with contempt, Acts iv. 13; and the Gentiles also generally despised them on the same account. As they afforded our apostle no better title than that of a "babbler," chap. xvii. 18, so for a long time they kept up the public vogue in the world, that Christianity was the religion of idiots and men illiterate. But God had another design in this order of things, which our apostle declares upon an admission of the inconsiderable meanness of them unto whom the dispensation of the gospel was committed: 2 Cor. iv. 7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." The reason why God would make use of such instruments only in so great a work was, that through their meanness his own glorious power might be more conspicuous. There is nothing more common among men, or more natural unto them, than to admire the excellencies of those of their own race and kind, and a willingness to have all evidences of a divine, supernatural power clouded and hidden from them. If, therefore, there had been such persons employed as instruments in this work, whose powers, abilities, qualifications, and endowments, might have been probably pretended as sufficient, and the immediate causes of such an effect, there would have been no observation of the divine power and glory of God. But he who is not able to discern them in the bringing about of so mighty a work by means so dis-

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proportionate thereunto, is under the power of the unrelievable prejudices intimated by our apostle in this case, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

(2.) The *means* which were to be used unto this end,—namely, the *subduing of the world* unto the faith and obedience of the gospel, so erecting the spiritual kingdom of Christ in the minds of men who before were under the power and dominion of his adversary,—must either be *force* and *arms*, or *eloquence*, in plausible, persuasive reasonings. And mighty works have been wrought by the one and the other of them. By the former have empires been set up and established in the world, and the superstition of Mohammed imposed on many nations. And the latter also hath had great effects on the minds of many. Wherefore, it might have been expected that those who had engaged themselves in so great a design and work as that mentioned should betake themselves unto the one or other of these means and ways; for the wit of man cannot contrive any way unto such an end but what may be reduced unto one of these two, seeing neither upon the principles of nature nor on the rules of human wisdom or policy can any other be imagined. But even *both these ways* were abandoned by them, and they declared against the use of either of them: for as outward force, power, and authority, they had none, the use of all carnal weapons being utterly inconsistent with this work and design; so the other way, of persuasive orations, of enticing words, of alluring arts and eloquence, with the like effects of human wisdom and skill, were all of them studiously declined by them in this work, as things extremely prejudicial to the success thereof, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. But this alone they betook themselves unto,—they went up and down, preaching to Jews and Gentiles "that Jesus Christ died for our sins, and rose again, according to the Scriptures," chap. xv. 3, 4. And this they did by virtue of those spiritual gifts which were the hidden powers of the world to come, whose nature, virtue, and power, others were utterly unacquainted withal. This preaching of theirs, this preaching of the cross, both for the subject-matter and manner of it, without art, eloquence, or oratory, was looked on as a marvellous foolish thing, a sweaty kind of babbling, by all those who had got any reputation of learning or cunning amongst men. This our apostle at large discourseth, 1 Cor. i. 17–31. In this state of things, every thing was under as many improbabilities of success, unto all rational conjectures, as can be conceived. Besides, together with the doctrine of the gospel that they preached, which was new and uncouth unto the world, they taught observances of religious worship, in meetings, assemblies, or conventicles, to that end, which all the laws in the world did prohibit, Acts xvi. 21, xviii. 13. Hereupon, no sooner did the rulers and governors of the world begin to take notice of them and what they did, but they

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judged that it all tended to sedition, and that commotions would ensue thereon. These things enraged the generality of mankind against them and their converts; who therefore made havoc of them with incredible fury. And yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, and against all these oppositions, their doctrine prevailed to subdue the world to the obedience thereof. And there may be added unto all these things one or two considerations from the state of things at that time in the world, which signalize the quality of this work, and manifest it to have been of God; as,—

[1.] That in the New Testament, the writers of it do constantly distribute all those with whom they had to do in this world into *Jews* and *Greeks*, which we render *Gentiles*, the other nations of the world coming under that denomination because of their pre-eminence on various accounts. Now, the Jews at that time were *in solidum* possessed of all the true religion that was in the world, and this they boasted of as their privilege, bearing up themselves with the thought and reputation of it everywhere and on all occasions; it being at that time their great business to gain proselytes unto it, whereon also their honour and advantage did depend. The Greeks, on the other side, were in as full a possession of arts, sciences, literature, and all that which the world calls "wisdom," as the Jews were of religion; and they had also a religion, received by a long tradition of their fathers, from time immemorial, which they had variously cultivated and dressed with mysteries and ceremonies, unto their own complete satisfaction. Besides, the Romans, who were the ruling part of the Gentiles, did ascribe all their prosperity and the whole raising of their stupendous empire to their gods and the religious worship they gave unto them; so that it was a fundamental maxim in their policy and rule, that they should prosper or decay according as they observed or were negligent in the religion they received; as, indeed, not only those who owned the true God and his providence, but, before idolatry and superstition had given place unto atheism, all people did solemnly impute all their achievements and successes unto their gods, as the prophet speaks of the Chaldeans, Hab. i. 11; and he who first undertook to record the exploits of the nations of the world doth constantly assign all their good and evil unto their gods, as they were pleased or provoked. The Romans, in especial, boasted that their religion was the cause of their prosperity: "Pietate et religione atque hâc una sapientia, quòd deorum immortalium numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superamus," says their great oracle [orator?] Orat. de Har. Resp., 9. And Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a great and wise historian, giving an account of the religion of the Romans and the ceremonies of their worship, affirms that he doth it unto

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this end, "that those who have been ignorant of the Roman piety should cease to wonder at their prosperity and successes in all their wars, seeing, by reason of their religion, they had the gods always propitious and succourable unto them," Antiq. Rom. lib. ii. The consideration hereof made them so obstinate in their adherence unto their present religion, that when, after many ages and hundreds of years, some books of Numa, their second king, and principal establisher of their commonwealth, were occasionally found, instead of paying them any respect, they ordered them to be burnt, because one who had perused them took his oath that they were contrary to their present worship and devotion! And this was that which, upon the declension of their empire, after the prevalency of the Christian religion, those who were obstinate in their Paganism reflected severely upon the Christians; the relinquishment of their old religion they fiercely avowed to be the cause of all their calamities;—in answer unto which calumny, principally, Austin wrote his excellent discourse, De Civitate Dei.

In this state of things the preachers of the gospel come among them, and not only bring a new doctrine, under all the disadvantages before mentioned, and, moreover, that he who was the head of it was newly crucified by the present powers of the earth for a malefactor, but also such a doctrine as was expressly to take away the religion from the Jews, and the wisdom from the Greeks, and the principal maxim of polity from the Romans, whereon they thought they had raised their empire! It were easy to declare how all those sects were engaged, in worldly interest, honour, reputation, and principles of safety, to oppose, decry, condemn, and reject, this new doctrine. And if a company of sorry craftsmen were able to fill a whole city with tumult and uproar against the gospel, as they did when they apprehended it would bring in a decay of their trade, Acts xix. 23–41, what can we think was done in all the world by all those who were engaged and enraged by higher provocations? It was as death to the Jews to part with their religion, both on the account of the conviction they had of its truth and the honour they esteemed to accrue to themselves thereby; and for the Greeks to have that wisdom, which they and their forefathers had been labouring in for so many generations, now to be all rejected as an impertinent foolery by the sorry preachments of a few illiterate persons, it raised them unto the highest indignation; and the Romans were wise enough to secure the fundamental maxim of their state. Wherefore the world seemed very sufficiently fortified against the admission of this new and strange doctrine, on the terms whereon it was proposed. There can be no danger, sure, that ever it should obtain any considerable progress. But we know that things fell out quite otherwise; religion,

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wisdom, and power, with honour, profit, interest, reputation, were all forced to give way to its power and efficacy.

[2.] The world was at that time in the highest enjoyment of *peace, prosperity,* and *plenty,* that ever it attained from the entrance of sin; and it is known how from all these things is usually made *provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.* Whatever the pride, ambition, covetousness, sensuality, of any persons could carry them forth to lust after, the world was full of satisfactions for; and most men lived, as in the eager pursuit of their lusts, so in a full supply of what they did require. In this condition the gospel is preached unto them, requiring at once, and that indispensably, a renunciation of all those worldly lusts which before had been the salt of their lives. If men designed any compliance with it or interest in it, their pride, ambition, luxury, covetousness, sensuality, malice, revenge, must all be mortified and rooted up. Had it only been a new doctrine and religion, declaring that knowledge and worship of God which they had never heard of before, they could not but be very wary in giving it entertainment; but when withal it required, at the first instant, that for its sake they should "pull out their right eyes, and cut off their right hands," to part with all that was dear and useful unto them, and which had such a prevalent interest in their minds and affections as corrupt lusts are known to have, this could not but invincibly fortify them against its admittance. But yet this also was forced to give place, and all the fortifications of Satan therein were, by the power of the word, cast to the ground, as our apostle expresseth it, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, where he gives an account of that warfare whereby the world was subdued to Christ by the gospel. Now, a man that hath a mind to make himself an instance of conceited folly and pride, may talk as though there was in all this no evidence of divine power giving testimony to the Scripture and the doctrine contained in it; but the characters of it are so legible unto every modest and sedate prospect that they leave no room for doubt or hesitation.

But the force of the whole argument is liable unto one exception of no small moment, which must, therefore, necessarily be taken notice of and removed: for whereas we plead the power, efficacy, and prevalency of the gospel in former days, as a demonstration of its divine original, it will be inquired "whence it is that it is not still accompanied with the same power, nor doth produce the same effects; for we see the profession of it is now confined to narrow limits in comparison of what it formerly extended itself unto, neither do we find that it gets ground anywhere in the world, but is rather more and more straitened every day. Wherefore, either the first prevalency that is asserted unto it, and argued as an evidence of

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its divinity, did indeed proceed from some other accidental causes, in an efficacious though unseen concurrence, and was not by an emanation of power from itself; or the gospel is not at present what it was formerly, seeing it hath not the same effect upon or power over the minds of men as that had of old. We may, therefore, suspend the pleading of this argument from what was done by the gospel formerly, lest it reflect disadvantage upon what we profess at present."

Ans. 1. Whatever *different events* may fall out in *different seasons*, yet the gospel is the same as ever it was from the beginning. There is not another book, containing another doctrine, crept into the world instead of that once delivered unto the saints; and whatever various apprehensions men may have, through their weakness or prejudices, concerning the things taught therein, yet are they in themselves absolutely the same that ever they were, and that without the loss or change of a material word or syllable in the manner of their delivery. This I have proved elsewhere, and it is a thing capable of the most evident demonstration. Wherefore, whatever entertainment this gospel meets withal at present in the world, its former prevalency may be pleaded in justification of its divine original.

2. The *cause of this event lieth principally in the sovereign will and pleasure of God*; for although the Scripture be his word, and he hath testified it so to be by his power, put forth and exerted in dispensations of it unto men, yet is not that divine power included or shut up in the *letter* of it, so that it must have the *same effect* wherever it comes. We plead not that there is absolutely in itself, its doctrine, the preaching or preachers thereof, such a power, as it were naturally and physically, to produce the effects mentioned; but it is an instrument in the hand of God unto that work which is his own, and he puts forth his power in it and by it as it seems good unto him. And if he do at any time so put forth his divine power in the administration of it, or in the use of this instrument, as that the great worth and excellency of it shall manifest itself to be from him, he giveth a sufficient attestation of it. Wherefore, the times and seasons of the prevalency of the gospel in the world are in the hand and at the sovereign disposal of God; and as he is not obliged (for "who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?") to accompany it with the same power at all times and seasons, so the evidence of his own power going along with it at any time, whilst under an open claim of a divine original, is an uncontrollable approbation of it. Thus, at the first preaching of the word, to fulfil the promises made unto the fathers from the foundation of the world, to glorify his Son Jesus Christ, and the gospel itself which he had revealed, he put forth that effectual divine

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power in its administration, whereby the world was subdued unto the obedience of it; and the time will come when he will revive the same work of power and grace, to retrieve the world into a subjection to Jesus Christ. And although he doth not in these latter ages cause it to run and prosper among the nations of the world who have not as yet received it, as he did formerly, yet, considering the state of things at present among the generality of mankind, the preservation of it in that small remnant by whom it is obeyed in sincerity is a no less glorious evidence of his presence with it and care over it than was its eminent propagation in days of old.

3. The *righteousness of God* is in like manner to be considered in these things: for whereas he had granted the inestimable privilege of his word unto many nations, they, through their horrible ingratitude and wickedness, detained the truth in unrighteousness, so that the continuance of the gospel among them was no way to the glory of God, no, nor yet unto their own advantage; for neither nations nor persons will ever be advantaged by an outward profession of the gospel whilst they live in a contradiction and disobedience to its precepts, yea, nothing can be more pernicious to the souls of men. This impiety God is at this day revenging on the nations of the world, having utterly cast off many of them from the knowledge of the truth, and given up others unto "strong delusions to believe lies," though they retain the Scriptures and outward profession of Christianity. How far he may proceed in the same way of righteous vengeance towards other nations also we know not, but ought to tremble in the consideration of it. When God first granted the gospel unto the world, although the generality of mankind had greatly sinned against the light of nature, and had rejected all those supernatural revelations that at any time had been made unto them, yet had they not sinned against the gospel itself nor the grace thereof. It pleased God, therefore, to wink at and pass over that time of their ignorance, so as that his justice should not be provoked by any of their former sins to withhold from them the efficacy of his divine power in the administration of the gospel, whereby he "called them to repentance." But now, after that the gospel hath been sufficiently tendered unto all nations, and hath, either as unto its profession or as unto its power, with the obedience that it requires, been rejected by the most of them, things are quite otherwise stated. It is from the "righteous judgment of God," revenging the sins of the world against the gospel itself, that so many nations are deprived of it, and so many left obstinate in its refusal. Wherefore, the present state of things doth no way weaken or prejudice the evidence given unto the Scripture by that mighty power of God which accompanied the administration of it in the world. For what hath

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since fallen out, there are secret reasons of sovereign wisdom, and open causes in divine justice, whereunto it is to be assigned.

These things I have briefly called over, and not as though they were all of this kind that may be pleaded, but only to give some *instances* of those *external arguments* whereby the divine authority of the Scripture may be confirmed.

Now, these arguments are such as are able of themselves to beget in the minds of men sober, humble, intelligent, and unprejudiced, a firm opinion, judgment, and persuasion, that the Scripture doth proceed from God. Where persons are prepossessed with invincible prejudices, contracted by a course of education, wherein they have imbibed principles opposite and contrary thereunto, and have increased and fortified them by some fixed and hereditary enmity against all those whom they know to own the divinity of the Scripture,—as it is with Mohammedans and some of the Indians,—these arguments, it may be, will not prevail immediately to work or effect their assent. It is so with respect unto them also who, out of love unto and delight in those ways of vice, sin, and wickedness, which are absolutely and severely condemned in the Scripture, without the least hope of a dispensation unto them that continue under the power of them, will not take these arguments into due consideration. Such persons may talk and discourse of them, but they never weigh them seriously, according as the importance of the cause doth require; for if men will examine them as they ought, it must be with a sedate judgment that their eternal condition depends upon a right determination of this inquiry. But [as] for those who can scarce get liberty from the service and power of their lusts seriously to consider what is their condition, or what it is like to be, it is no wonder if they talk of these things, after the manner of these days, without any impression on their minds and affections, or influence on the practical understanding. But our inquiry is after what is a sufficient evidence for the conviction of rational and unprejudiced persons, and the defeating of objections to the contrary; which these and the like arguments do every way answer.

Some think fit here to stay,—that is, in these or the like external arguments, or rational *motives of faith*, such as render the Scriptures so credible as that it is an unreasonable thing not to assent unto them. "That *certainty* which may be attained on these arguments and motives is," as they say, "the highest which our minds are capable of with respect unto this object, and therefore includes all the *assent* which is required of us unto this proposition, 'That the Scriptures are the word of God,' or all the faith whereby we believe them so to be." When I speak of these arguments, I intend not them *alone* which I have insisted on, but all others also of the same kind, some whereof

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have been urged and improved by others with great diligence; for in the variety of such arguments as offer themselves in this cause, every one chooseth out what seems to him most cogent, and some amass all that they can think on. Now, these arguments, with the evidence tendered in them, are such as nothing but *perverse prejudice* can detain men from giving a *firm assent* unto; and no more is required of us but that, according to the *motives* that are proposed unto us, and the *arguments* used to that purpose, we come unto a judgment and persuasion, called a *moral assurance*, of the truth of the Scripture, and endeavour to yield obedience unto God accordingly.

And it were to be wished that there were more than it is feared there are who were really so affected with these arguments and motives, for the truth is, *tradition* and *education* practically bear the whole sway in this matter. But yet, when all this is done, it will be said that all this is but a *mere natural work*, whereunto no more is required but the *natural exercise* and acting of our *own reason* and understanding; that the arguments and motives used, though strong, are *human* and *fallible*, and, therefore, the conclusion we make from them is so also, and wherein we may be deceived; that an assent grounded and resolved into such *rational arguments* only is not *faith* in the sense of the Scripture; in brief, that it is required that we *believe the Scriptures to be the word of God with faith divine and supernatural*, which cannot be deceived. Two things are replied hereunto:—

1. "*That where the things believed are divine and supernatural, so is the faith whereby we believe them or give our assent unto them.* Let the motives and arguments whereon we give our assent be of what kind they will, so that the assent be true and real, and the things believed be divine and supernatural, the faith whereby we believe is so also." But this is all one as if, in things natural, a man should say our sight is green when we see that which is so, and blue when we see that which is blue. And this would be so in things moral, if the specification of acts were from their material objects; but it is certain that they are not of the same nature always with the things they are conversant about, nor are they changed thereby from what their nature is in themselves, be it natural or supernatural, human or divine. Now, things divine are only the material object of our faith, as hath been showed before; and by an enumeration of them do we answer unto the question, "What is it that ye do believe?" But it is the formal object or reason of all our acts from whence they are denominated, or by which they are specified. And the formal reason of our faith, assent, or believing, is that which prevails with us to believe, and on whose account we do so, wherewith we answer unto that question, "Why do ye believe?" If this be human autho-

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rity, arguments highly probable but absolutely fallible, motives cogent but only to beget a moral persuasion, whatever we do believe thereon, our faith is human, fallible, and a moral assurance only. Wherefore it is said,—

2. "That this *assent* is sufficient, all that is required of us, and contains in it all the *assurance* which our minds are capable of in this matter; for no farther evidence or assurance is in any case to be inquired after than the subject-matter will bear. And so is it in this case, where the truth is not exposed to sense, nor capable of a scientifical demonstration, but must be received upon such reasons and arguments as carry it above the highest probability, though they leave it beneath science, or knowledge, or infallible assurance, if such a persuasion of mind there be."

But yet I must needs say, that although those external arguments, whereby learned and rational men have proved, or may yet farther prove, the Scripture to be a divine revelation given of God, and the doctrine contained in it to be a heavenly truth, are of singular use for the strengthening of the faith of them that do believe, by relieving the mind against temptations and objections that will arise to the contrary, as also for the conviction of gainsayers; yet to say that they contain the formal reason of that assent which is required of us unto the Scripture as the word of God, that our faith is the effect and product of them, which it rests upon and is resolved into, is both contrary to the Scripture, destructive of the nature of divine faith, and exclusive of the work of the Holy Ghost in this whole matter.

Wherefore, I shall do these two things before I proceed to our principal argument designed:—1. I shall give some few reasons, proving that the faith whereby we believe the Scripture to be the *word* of God is not a mere firm moral persuasion, built upon external arguments and motives of credibility, but is divine and supernatural, because the *formal reason* of it is so also. 2. I shall show what is the *nature of that faith* whereby we do or ought to believe the Scripture to be the *word* of God, what is the work of the Holy Spirit about it, and what is the proper object of it. In the first I shall be very brief, for my design is to strengthen the faith of all, and not to weaken the opinions of any.

CHAPTER IV.

Moral certainty, the result of external arguments, insufficient.

1. *Divine revelation* is the proper object of *divine faith*. With such faith we can believe nothing but what is so, and what is so can be

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received no otherwise by us. If we believe it not with divine faith, we believe it not at all. Such is the Scripture, as the word of God, everywhere proposed unto us, and we are required to believe,—that is, first to believe it so to be, and then to believe the things contained in it; for this proposition, "That the Scripture is the word of God," is a divine revelation, and so to be believed. But God nowhere requires, nor ever did, that we should believe any divine revelation upon such grounds, much less on such grounds and motives only. They are left unto us as consequential unto our believing, to plead with others in behalf of what we profess, and for the justification of it unto the world. But that which he requires our faith and obedience unto, in the receiving of divine revelations, whether immediately given and declared or as recorded in the Scripture, is his own authority and veracity: "I am the LORD;" "Thus saith the high and lofty One;" "Thus saith the LORD;" "To the law and to the testimony;" "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him;" "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" "Believe in the LORD and his prophets." This alone is that which he requires us to resolve our faith into. So when he gave unto us the law of our lives, the eternal and unchangeable rule of our obedience unto him, in the ten commandments, he gives no other reason to oblige us thereunto but this only, "I am the LORD thy God." The sole formal reason of all our obedience is taken from his own nature and our relation unto him; nor doth he propose any other reason why we should believe him, or the revelation which he makes of his mind and will. And our faith is part of our obedience, the root and principal part of it; therefore, the reason of both is the same. Neither did our Lord Jesus Christ nor his apostles ever make use of such arguments or motives for the ingenerating of faith in the minds of men, nor have they given directions for the use of any such arguments to this end and purpose. But when they were accused to have followed "cunningly-devised fables," they appealed unto Moses and the prophets, to the revelations they had themselves received, and those that were before recorded. It is true, they wrought miracles in confirmation of their own divine mission and of the doctrine which they taught; but the miracles of our Saviour were all of them wrought amongst those who believed the whole Scripture then given to be the word of God, and those of the apostles were before the writings of the books of the New Testament. Their doctrine, therefore, materially considered, and their warranty to teach it, were sufficiently, yea, abundantly confirmed by them. But divine revelation, formally considered, and as written, was left upon the old foundation of the authority of God who gave it. No such method is prescribed, no such example is proposed unto us in the Scripture, as to make use of these arguments and motives for

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the conversion of the souls of men unto God, and the ingenerating of faith in them; yea, in some cases, the use of such means is decried as unprofitable, and the sole authority of God, putting forth his power in and by his word, is appealed unto, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, 13, xiv. 36, 37; 2 Cor. iv. 7. But yet, in a way of preparation, subservient unto the receiving the Scripture as the word of God, and for the defence of it against gainsayers and their objections, their use hath been granted and proved. But from first to last, in the Old and New Testament, the authority and truth of God are constantly and uniformly proposed as the immediate ground and reason of believing his revelations; nor can it be proved that he doth accept or approve of any kind of faith or assent but what is built thereon and resolved thereinto. The sum is, We are obliged in a way of duty to believe the Scriptures to be a divine revelation, when they are ministerially or providentially proposed unto us; whereof afterward. The ground whereon we are to receive them is the authority and veracity of God speaking in them; we believe them because they are the word of God. Now, this faith, whereby we so believe, is divine and supernatural, because the formal reason of it is so,—namely, God's truth and authority. Wherefore, we do not nor ought only to believe the Scripture as highly probable, or with a moral persuasion and assurance, built upon arguments absolutely fallible and human; for if this be the formal reason of faith, namely, the veracity and authority of God, if we believe not with faith divine and supernatural, we believe not at all.

2. The *moral certainty* treated of is a mere effect of reason. There is no more required unto it but that the reasons proposed for the assent required be such as the mind judgeth to be convincing and prevalent; whence an inferior kind of knowledge, or a firm opinion, or some kind of persuasion which hath not yet gotten an intelligible name, doth necessarily ensue. There is, therefore, on this supposition, no need of any work of the Holy Ghost to enable us to believe or to work faith in us; for no more is required herein but what necessarily ariseth from a naked exercise of reason. If it be said that the inquiry is not about what is the work of the Spirit of God in us, but concerning the reasons and motives to believing that are proposed unto us, I answer, it is granted; but what we urge herein is, that the act which is exerted on such motives, or the persuasion which is begotten in our minds by them, is purely natural, and such as requires no especial work of the Holy Ghost in us for the effecting of it. Now, this is not faith, nor can we be said in the Scripture sense to believe hereby, and so, in particular, not the Scriptures to be the word of God; for faith is "the gift of God," and is "not of ourselves," Eph. ii. 8. It is "given unto some on the behalf

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of Christ," Phil. i. 29, and not unto others; Matt. xi. 25, xiii. 11. But this assent on external arguments and motives is of ourselves, equally common and exposed unto all. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3; but he who believeth the Scripture truly, aright, and according to his duty, doth say so. No man cometh to Christ, but he that hath "heard and learned of the Father," John vi. 45. And as this is contrary to the Scripture, so it is expressly condemned by the ancient church, particularly by the second Arausican council, can. 5, 7: "Si quis sicut augmentum ita etiam initium fidei, ipsumque credulitatis affectum, non per gratiæ donum, id est, per inspirationem Spiritus Sancti, corrigentem voluntatem nostram ab infidelitate ad fidem, ab impietate ad pietatem, sed naturaliter nobis inesse dicit, apostolicis dogmatibus adversarius approbatur." And plainly, can. 7: "Si quis per naturæ vigorem bonum aliquod quod ad salutem pertinet vitæ eternæ, cogitare ut expedit, aut eligere, sive salutari, id est, evangelicæ prædicationi consentire posse affirmat absque illuminatione et inspiratione Spiritus Sancti, qui dat omnibus suavitatem consentiendo et credendo veritati, hæretico fallitur spiritu."

It is still granted that the arguments intended (that is, all of them which are true indeed and will endure a strict examination, for some are frequently made use of in this cause which will not endure a trial) are of good use in their place and unto their proper end,—that is, to beget such an assent unto the truth as they are capable of effecting; for although this be not that which is required of us in a way of duty, but inferior to it, yet the mind is prepared and disposed by them unto the receiving of the truth in its proper evidence.

3. Our assent can be of no other nature than the arguments and motives whereon it is built, or by which it is wrought in us, as in *degree* it cannot exceed their *evidence*. Now, these arguments are all human and fallible. Exalt them unto the greatest esteem possible, yet because they are not demonstrations, nor do necessarily beget a certain knowledge in us (which, indeed, if they did, there were no room left for faith or our obedience therein), they produce an opinion only, though in the highest kind of probability, and firm against objections; for we will allow the utmost assurance that can be claimed upon them. But this is exclusive of all divine faith, as to any article, thing, matter, or object to be believed. For instance, a man professeth that he believes Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. Demand the reason why he doth so, and he will say, "Because God, who cannot lie, hath revealed and declared him so to be." Proceed yet farther, and ask him where or how God hath revealed and declared this so to be; and he will answer, "In the Scripture, which is his

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word." Inquire now farther of him (which is necessary) wherefore he believes this Scripture to be the word of God, or an immediate revelation given out from him,—for hereunto we must come, and have somewhat that we may ultimately rest in, excluding in its own nature all farther inquiries, or we can have neither certainty nor stability in our faith;—on this supposition his answer must be, that he hath many cogent arguments that render it highly probable so to be, such as have prevailed with him to judge it so to be, and whereon he is fully persuaded, as having the highest assurance hereof that the matter will bear, and so doth firmly believe it to be the word of God. Yea, but, it will be replied, all these arguments are in their kind or nature human, and therefore fallible, such as it is possible they may be false; for every thing may be so that is not immediately from the first essential Verity. This assent, therefore, unto the Scriptures as the word of God is human, fallible, and such as wherein we may be deceived. And our assent unto the things revealed can be of no other kind than that we give unto the revelation itself, for thereinto it is resolved, and thereunto it must be reduced; these waters will rise no higher than their fountain. And thus at length we come to believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God with a faith human and fallible, and which at last may deceive us; which is to "receive the word of God as the word of men, and not as it is in truth, the word of God," contrary to the apostle, 1 Thess. ii. 13. Wherefore,—

4. If I believe the Scripture to be the *word* of God with a human faith only, I do no otherwise believe whatever is contained in it, which overthrows all faith properly so called; and if I believe whatever is contained in the Scripture with faith divine and supernatural, I cannot but by the same faith believe the Scripture itself, which removes the moral certainty treated of out of our way. And the reason of this is, that we must believe the revelation and the things revealed with the same kind of faith, or we bring confusion on the whole work of believing. No man living can distinguish in his experience between that faith wherewith he believes the Scripture and that wherewith he believes the doctrine of it, or the things contained in it, nor is there any such distinction or difference intimated in the Scripture itself; but all our believing is absolutely resolved into the authority of God revealing. Nor can it be rationally apprehended that our assent unto the things revealed should be of a kind and nature superior unto that which we yield unto the revelation itself; for let the arguments which it is resolved into be never so evident and cogent, let the assent itself be as firm and certain as can be imagined, yet is it human still and natural, and therein is inferior unto that which is divine and supernatural. And yet, on this supposition, that which is of a superior kind and nature is wholly

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resolved into that which is of an inferior, and must betake itself on all occasions thereunto for relief and confirmation; for the faith whereby we believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God is on all occasions absolutely melted down into that whereby we believe the Scriptures to be the word of God.

But none of these things are my present especial design, and therefore I have insisted long enough upon them. I am not inquiring what grounds men may have to build an opinion or any kind of human persuasion upon that the Scriptures are the word of God, no, nor yet how we may prove or maintain them so to be unto gainsayers; but what is required hereunto that we may believe them to be so with faith divine and supernatural, and what is the work of the Spirit of God therein.

But it may be farther said, "That these external arguments and motives are not of themselves, and considered separately from the doctrine which they testify unto, the sole ground and reason of our believing; for if it were possible that a thousand arguments of a like cogency with them were offered to confirm any truth or doctrine, if it had not a divine worth and excellency in itself, they could give the mind no assurance of it. Wherefore it is the truth itself, or doctrine contained in the Scripture, which they testify unto, that animates them and gives them their efficacy; for there is such a majesty, holiness, and excellency, in the doctrines of the gospel, and, moreover, such a suitableness in them unto unprejudiced reason, and such an answerableness unto all the rational desires and expectations of the soul, as evidence their procedure from the fountain of infinite wisdom and goodness. It cannot but be conceived impossible that such excellent, heavenly mysteries, of such use and benefit unto all mankind, should be the product of any created industry. Let but a man know himself, his state and condition, in any measure, with a desire of that blessedness which his nature is capable of, and which he cannot but design, when the Scripture is proposed unto him in the ministry of the church, attested by the arguments insisted on, there will appear unto him in the truths and doctrines of it, or in the things contained in it, such an evidence of the majesty and authority of God as will prevail with him to believe it to be a divine revelation. And this persuasion is such that the mind is established in its assent unto the truth, so as to yield obedience unto all that is required of us. And whereas our belief of the Scripture is in order only to the right performance of our duty, or all that obedience which God expecteth from us, our minds being guided by the precepts and directions, and duly influenced by the promises and threatenings of it thereunto, there is no other faith required of us but what is sufficient to oblige us unto that obedience."

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This being, so far as I can apprehend, the substance of what is by some learned men proposed and adhered unto, it shall be briefly examined. And I say here, as on other occasions, that I should rejoice to see more of such a faith in the world as would effectually oblige men unto obedience, out of a conviction of the excellency of the doctrine and the truth of the promises and threatenings of the word, though learned men should never agree about the formal reason of faith. Such notions of truth, when most diligently inquired into, are but as sacrifice compared with obedience. But the truth itself is also to be inquired after diligently.

This opinion, therefore, either supposeth what we shall immediately declare,—namely, the *necessity* of an internal, effectual work of the Holy Spirit, in the *illumination of our minds*, so enabling us to believe with faith *divine and supernatural*,—or it doth not. If it do, it will be found, as I suppose, for the substance of it, to be coincident with what we shall afterward assert and prove to be the *formal reason* of believing. However, as it is usually proposed, I cannot absolutely comply with it, for these two reasons, among others:—

1. It belongs unto the nature of faith, of what sort soever it be, that it be built on and resolved into *testimony*. This is that which distinguisheth it from any other conception, knowledge, or assent of our minds, on other reasons and causes. And if this testimony be divine, so is that faith whereby we give assent unto it, on the part of the object. But the doctrines contained in the Scripture, or the subject-matter of the truth to be believed, have not in them the nature of a testimony, but are the material, not formal, objects of faith, which must always differ. If it be said that these truths or doctrines do so evidence themselves to be from God, as that in and by them we have the witness and authority of God himself proposed unto us to resolve our faith into, I will not farther contend about it, but only say that the authority of God, and so his veracity, do manifest themselves primarily in the revelation itself, before they do so in the things revealed; which is that we plead for.

2. The *excellency of the doctrine*, or things revealed in the Scriptures, respects not so much the truth of them in speculation as their goodness and suitableness unto the souls of men as to their present condition and eternal end. Now, things under that consideration respect not so much *faith* as *spiritual sense* and experience. Neither can any man have a due apprehension of such a goodness suitable unto our constitution and condition, with absolute usefulness in the truth of the Scriptures, but on a supposition of that antecedent assent of the mind unto them which is believing; which, therefore, cannot be the reason why we do believe.

But if this opinion proceed not upon the aforesaid supposition

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(immediately to be proved), but requires no more unto our satisfaction in the truth of the Scriptures, and assent thereon, but the due exercise of reason, or the natural faculties of our minds, about them when proposed unto us, then I suppose it to be most remote from the truth, and that amongst many other reasons, for these that ensue:—

1. On this supposition, the whole *work of believing* would be a work of *reason*. "Be it so," say some; "nor is it meet it should be otherwise conceived." But if so, then the object of it must be things so evident in themselves and their own nature as that the mind is, as it were, compelled by that evidence unto an assent, and cannot do otherwise. If there be such a light and evidence in the things themselves, with respect unto our reason, in the right use and exercise of it, then is the mind thereby necessitated unto its assent: which both overthrows the nature of faith, substituting an assent upon natural evidence in the room thereof, and is absolutely exclusive of the necessity or use of any work of the Holy Ghost in our believing, which sober Christians will scarcely comply withal.

2. There are *some doctrines* revealed in the Scripture, and those of the most importance that are so revealed, which concern and contain things so *above our reason* that, without some previous supernatural disposition of mind, they carry in them no evidence of truth unto mere reason, nor of suitableness unto our constitution and end. There is required unto such an apprehension both the spiritual elevation of the mind by supernatural illumination, and a divine assent unto the authority of the revelation thereon, before reason can be so much as satisfied in the truth and excellency of such doctrines. Such are those concerning the holy Trinity, or the subsistence of one singular essence in three distinct persons, the incarnation of the Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, and sundry others, that are the most proper subjects of divine revelation. There is a heavenly glory in some of these things, which as reason can never thoroughly apprehend, because it is finite and limited, so, as it is in us by nature, it can neither receive them nor delight in them as doctrinally proposed unto us, with all the aids and assistance before mentioned. Flesh and blood reveals not these things unto our minds, but our Father which is in heaven; nor doth any man know these mysteries of the kingdom of God, but he "unto whom it is given;" nor do any learn these things aright, but those that are taught of God.

3. Take our reason singly, without the consideration of divine *grace* and *illumination*, and it is not only weak and limited, but depraved and corrupted; and the carnal mind cannot subject itself unto the authority of God in any supernatural revelation whatever.

Wherefore, the truth is, that the doctrines of the gospel, which are

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purely and absolutely so, are so far from having a convincing evidence in themselves of their divine truth, excellency, and goodness, unto the reason of men as unrenewed by the Holy Ghost, as that they are "foolishness" and most undesirable unto it, as I have elsewhere proved at large. We shall, therefore, proceed.

There are two things considerable with respect unto our believing the Scriptures to be the word of God in a due manner, or according to our duty. The first respects the *subject*, or the *mind of man*, how it is enabled thereunto; the other, the *object* to be believed, with the true reason why we do believe the Scripture with faith divine and supernatural.

The first of these must of necessity fall under our consideration herein, as that without which, whatever reasons, evidences, or motives are proposed unto us, we shall never believe in a due manner: for whereas the mind of man, or the minds of all men, are by *nature depraved, corrupt, carnal*, and *enmity against God*, they cannot of themselves, or by virtue of any innate ability of their own, understand or assent unto spiritual things in a spiritual manner; which we have sufficiently proved and confirmed before. Wherefore, that *assent* which is wrought in us by mere external arguments, consisting in the rational conclusion and judgment which we make upon their truth and evidence, is not that faith wherewith we ought to believe the word of God.

Wherefore, that we may believe the Scriptures to be the word of God according to our duty, as God requireth it of us, in a useful, profitable, and saving manner, above and beyond that *natural, human faith* and assent which is the effect of the arguments and motives of credibility before insisted on, with all others of the like kind, *there is and must be wrought in us, by the power of the Holy Ghost, faith supernatural and divine, whereby we are enabled so to do, or rather whereby we do so.* This work of the Spirit of God, as it is distinct from, so in order of nature it is antecedent unto, all *divine objective evidence* of the Scriptures being the word of God, or the formal reason moving us to believe it. Wherefore, without it, whatever arguments or motives are proposed unto us, we cannot believe the Scriptures to be the word of God in a due manner, and as it is in duty required of us.

Some, it may be, will suppose these things ἀπροσδιόνυσα, "out of place," and impertinent unto our present purpose; for while we are inquiring on what *grounds* we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, we seem to *flee to the work of the Holy Ghost* in our own minds, which is irrational. But we must not be ashamed of the gospel, nor of the truth of it, because some do not understand or will not duly consider what is proposed. It is necessary that we

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should return unto the work of the Holy Spirit, not with peculiar respect unto the Scriptures that are to be believed, but unto our own minds and that faith wherewith they are to be believed; for it is not the *reason* why we believe the Scriptures, but the *power* whereby we are enabled so to do, which at present we inquire after:—

1. That the *faith* whereby we believe the Scripture to be the word of God is *wrought in us by the Holy Ghost* can be denied only on two principles or suppositions:—(1.) That it is not *faith divine and supernatural* whereby we believe them so to be, but only we have other moral assurance thereof. (2.) That this *faith divine and supernatural* is of ourselves, and is not wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. The first of these hath been already disproved, and shall be farther evicted afterward, and, it may be, they are very few who are of that judgment; for, generally, whatever men suppose the prime object, principal motive, and *formal reason*, of that faith to be, yet that it is divine and supernatural they all acknowledge. And as to the second, what is so, it is of the operation of the Spirit of God; for to say it is *divine and supernatural* is to say that it is *not of ourselves*, but that it is the grace and gift of the Spirit of God, wrought in us by his divine and supernatural power. And those of the church of Rome, who would resolve our faith in this matter *objectively* into the authority of their church, yet *subjectively* acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit ingenerating faith in us, and that work to be necessary to our believing the Scripture in a due manner. "Externæ omnes et humanæ persuasiones non sunt satis ad credendum, quantumcunque ab hominibus competenter ea quæ sunt fidei proponantur. Sed necessaria est insuper causa interior, hoc est divinum quoddam lumen incitans ad credendum, et oculi quidam interni Dei beneficio ad videndum dati," saith Canus, Loc. Theol., lib. ii. cap. 8; nor is there any of the divines of that church which dissent herein. We do not, therefore, assert any such divine formal reason of believing, as that the mind should not stand in need of supernatural assistance enabling it to assent thereunto; nay, we affirm that without this there is in no man any true faith at all, let the arguments and motives whereon he believes be as forcible and pregnant with evidence as can be imagined. It is in this case as in things natural; neither the light of the sun, nor any persuasive arguments unto men to look up unto it, will enable them to discern it unless they are endued with a due visive faculty.

And this the Scripture is express in beyond all possibility of contradiction, neither is it, that I know of, by any as yet in express terms denied; for, indeed, that all which is *properly called faith*, with respect unto divine revelation, and is accepted with God as such, is the work of the Spirit of God in us, or is bestowed on us by

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him, cannot be questioned by any who own the gospel. I have also proved it elsewhere so fully and largely as that I shall give it at present no other confirmation but what will necessarily fall in with the description of the nature of that faith whereby we do believe, and the way or manner of its being wrought in us.

2. The work of the Holy Ghost unto this purpose consists in the saving *illumination* of the mind; and the effect of it is a *supernatural light*, whereby the mind is renewed: see Rom. xii. 2; Eph. i. 18, 19, iii. 16–19. It is called a "heart to understand, eyes to see, ears to hear," Deut. xxix. 4; the "opening of the eyes of our understanding," Eph. i. 18; the "giving of an understanding," 1 John v. 20. Hereby we are enabled to discern the evidences of the divine original and authority of the Scripture that are in itself, as well as assent unto the truth contained in it; and without it we cannot do so, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14; and unto this end it is written in the prophets that "we shall be all taught of God," John vi. 45. That there is a divine and heavenly excellency in the Scripture cannot be denied by any who, on any grounds or motives whatever, do own its divine original: for all the works of God do set forth his praise, and it is impossible that any thing should proceed immediately from him but that there will be express characters of divine excellencies upon it; and as to the communication of these characters of himself, he hath "magnified his word above all his name." But these we cannot discern, be they in themselves never so illustrious, without the effectual communication of the light mentioned unto our minds,—that is, without divine, supernatural illumination.

Herein "he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shineth in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. He irradiates the mind with a spiritual light, whereby it is enabled to discern the glory of spiritual things. This they cannot do "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them," verse 4. Those who are under the power of their natural darkness and blindness, especially where there are in them also superadded prejudices, begotten and increased by the craft of Satan, as there are in the whole world of unbelievers, cannot see or discern that divine excellency in the Scripture, without an apprehension whereof no man can believe it aright to be the word of God. Such persons may assent unto the truth of the Scripture and its divine original upon external arguments and rational motives, but

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believe it with faith divine and supernatural, on those arguments and motives only, they cannot.

There are two things which hinder or disenable men from believing with faith divine and supernatural, when any divine revelation is objectively proposed unto them:—First, The *natural blindness and darkness of their minds*, which are come upon all by the fall, and the depravation of their nature that ensued thereon. Secondly, The *prejudices* that, through the craft of Satan, the god of this world, their minds are possessed with, by *traditions, education, and converse* in the world. This last obstruction or hinderance may be so far removed by external arguments and motives of credibility, as that men may upon them attain unto a moral persuasion concerning the divine original of the Scripture; but these arguments cannot remove or take away the native blindness of the mind, which is removed by their renovation and divine illumination alone. Wherefore, none, I think, will positively affirm that we can believe the Scripture to be the word of God, in the way and manner which God requireth, without a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds in the illumination of them. So David prays that God would "open his eyes, that he might behold wondrous things out of the law," Ps. cxix. 18; that he would "make him understand the way of his precepts," verse 27; that he would "give him understanding, and he should keep the law," verse 34. So the Lord Christ also "opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures," Luke xxiv. 45; as he had affirmed before that it was given unto some to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and not unto others, Matt. xi. 25, xiii. 11. And neither are these things spoken in vain, nor is the grace intended in them needless.

The communication of this light unto us the Scripture calleth *revealing* and *revelation:* Matt. xi. 25, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;" that is, given them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, when they were preached unto them. And "no man knoweth the Father, but he to whom the Son will reveal him," verse 27. So the apostle prayeth for the Ephesians, "that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know," etc., chap. i. 17–19. It is true, these Ephesians were already believers, or considered by the apostle as such; but if he judged it necessary to pray for them that they might have "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to enlighten the eyes of their understanding," with respect unto farther degrees of faith and knowledge, or, as he speaks in another place, that they might come unto "the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of

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God," Col. ii. 2, then it is much more necessary to make them believers who before were not so, but utter strangers unto the faith.

But as a pretence hereof hath been abused, as we shall see afterward, so the pleading of it is liable to be mistaken; for some are ready to apprehend that this retreat unto a *Spirit of revelation* is but a pretence to discard all rational arguments, and to introduce *enthusiasm* into their room. Now, although the charge be grievous, yet, because it is groundless, we must not forego what the Scripture plainly affirms and instructs us in, thereby to avoid it. Scripture testimonies may be expounded according to the analogy of faith; but denied or despised, seem they never so contrary unto our apprehension of things, they must not be. Some, I confess, seem to disregard both the objective work of the Holy Spirit in this matter (whereof we shall treat afterward) and his subjective work also in our minds, that all things may be reduced unto sense and reason. But we must grant that a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" to open the eyes of our understanding is needful to enable us to believe the Scripture to be the word of God in a due manner, or forego the gospel; and our duty it is to pray continually for that Spirit, if we intend to be established in the faith thereof.

But yet we plead not for *external immediate revelations*, such as were granted unto the prophets, apostles, and other penmen of the Scripture. The revelation we intend differs from them both in its *especial subject and formal reason* or nature,—that is, in the whole kind; for, 1. The subject-matter of divine, *prophetical revelation* by a θεοπνευστία, or "*immediate divine inspiration*," are things not made known before. Things they were "hid in God," or the counsels of his will, and "revealed unto the apostles and prophets by the Spirit," Eph. iii. 5, 9, 10. Whether they were doctrines or things, they were, at least as unto their present circumstances, made known from the counsels of God by their revelation. But the matter and subject of the revelation we treat of is nothing but what is already revealed. It is an internal revelation of that which is outward and antecedent unto it; beyond the bounds thereof it is not to be extended. And if any pretend unto *immediate revelations* of things not before revealed, we have no concernment in their pretences. 2. They differ likewise in their nature or kind: for *immediate, divine, prophetical revelation*, consisted in an immediate inspiration or *afflatus*, or in visions and voices from heaven, with a power of the Holy Ghost *transiently* affecting their minds and guiding their tongues and hands to whom they were granted, whereby they received and represented divine impressions, as an instrument of music doth the skill of the hand whereby it is moved; the nature of which revelation I have more fully discoursed elsewhere;—but this *revelation of the*

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Spirit consists in his effectual operation, freeing our minds from darkness, ignorance, and prejudice, enabling them to discern spiritual things in a due manner. And such a *Spirit of revelation* is necessary unto them who would believe aright the Scripture, or any thing else that is divine and supernatural contained therein. And if men who, through the power of temptations and prejudices, are in the dark, or at a loss as to the great and fundamental principle of all religion,—namely, the divine original and authority of the Scripture,—will absolutely lean unto their own understandings, and have the whole difference determined by the natural powers and faculties of their own souls, without seeking after *divine aid and assistance*, or earnest prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to open the eyes of their understandings, they must be content to abide in their uncertainties, or to come off from them without any advantage to their souls. Not that I would deny unto men, or take them off from, the use of their reason in this matter; for what is their reason given unto them for, unless it be to use it in those things which are of the greatest importance unto them? only, I must crave leave to say that it is not sufficient of itself to enable us to the performance of this duty, without the immediate aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God.

If any one, upon these principles, shall now ask us *wherefore we believe the Scripture to be the word of God;* we do not answer, "It is *because the Holy Ghost hath enlightened our minds, wrought faith in us, and enabled us to believe it.*" Without this, we say, indeed, did not the Spirit of God so work in us and upon us, we neither should nor could believe with faith divine and supernatural. If God had not opened the heart of Lydia, she would not have attended unto the things preached by Paul, so as to have received them. And without it the light oftentimes shines in darkness, but the darkness comprehends it not. But this neither is nor can be the *formal object of our faith*, or the reason why we believe the Scripture to be of God, or any thing else; neither do we nor can we rationally answer by it unto this question, *why we do believe.* This reason must be something external and evidently proposed unto us; for whatever ability of spiritual assent there be in the understanding, which is thus wrought in it by the Holy Ghost, yet the understanding cannot assent unto any thing with any kind of assent, natural or supernatural, but what is outwardly proposed unto it as true, and that with sufficient evidence that it is so. That, therefore, which proposeth any thing unto us as true, with evidence of that truth, is the formal object of our faith, or the reason why we do believe, and what is so proposed must be evidenced to be true, or we cannot believe it; and according to the nature of that evidence such is our faith,—human if

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that be human, and divine if that be so. Now, nothing of this is done by that saving light which is infused into our minds; and it is, therefore, not the reason why we believe what we do so.

Whereas, therefore, some, who seem to conceive that the only *general ground* of *believing the Scripture* to be the *word* of God doth consist in *rational arguments* and *motives of credibility*, do grant that private persons may have their assurance hereof from the illumination of the Holy Ghost, though it be not pleadable to others, they grant what is not, that I know of, desired by any, and which in itself is not true; for this work consisting solely in enabling the mind unto that kind of assent which is faith divine and supernatural, on supposition of an external formal reason of it duly proposed, is not the reason why any do believe, nor the ground whereinto their faith is resolved.

It remains only that we inquire whether our faith in this matter be not resolved into an *immediate internal testimony of the Holy Ghost*, assuring us of the divine original and authority of the Scripture, distinct from the work of *spiritual illumination*, before described; for it is the common opinion of protestant divines that the *testimony of the Holy Ghost* is the ground whereon we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, and in what sense it is so shall be immediately declared. But hereon are they generally charged, by those of the church of Rome and others, that they resolve all the ground and assurance of faith into their own particular spirits, or the spirit of every one that will pretend thereunto; and this is looked upon as a sufficient warranty to reproach them with giving countenance unto *enthusiasms*, and exposing the minds of men to endless delusions. Wherefore, this matter must be a little farther inquired into. And,—

"By an *internal testimony of the Spirit*, an extraordinary *afflatus* or new immediate revelation may be intended. Men may suppose they have, or ought to have, an internal particular testimony that the Scripture is the word of God, whereby, and whereby alone, they may be infallibly assured that so it is. And this is supposed to be of the same nature with the revelation made unto the prophets and penmen of the Scripture; for it is neither an *external proposition* of truth nor an *internal ability to assent* unto such a proposition, and besides these there is no divine operation in this kind but an immediate *prophetical inspiration* or revelation. Wherefore, as such a revelation or immediate testimony of the Spirit is the only reason why we do believe, so it is that alone which our faith rests on and is resolved into."

This is that which is commonly imputed unto those who deny either the *authority of the church*, or any other *external arguments*

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or motives of credibility, to be the *formal reason* of our faith. Howbeit there is no one of them, that I know of, who ever asserted any such thing; and I do, therefore, deny that our faith is resolved into any such *private testimony*, immediate revelation, or inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and that for the ensuing reasons:—

1. Since the finishing of the canon of the Scripture, the church is not under that *conduct* as to stand in need of such new extraordinary revelations. It doth, indeed, live upon the internal gracious operations of the Spirit, enabling us to understand, believe, and obey the perfect, complete revelation of the will of God already made; but new revelations it hath neither need nor use of;—and to suppose them, or a necessity of them, not only overthrows the perfection of the Scripture, but also leaveth us uncertain whether we know all that is to be believed in order unto salvation, or our whole duty, or when we may do so; for it would be our duty to live all our days in expectation of new revelations, wherewith neither peace, assurance, nor consolation is consistent.

2. Those who are to *believe* will not be able, on this supposition, to secure themselves from *delusion*, and from being imposed on by the deceits of Satan; for this new revelation is to be tried by the Scripture, or it is not. If it be to be tried and examined by the Scripture, then doth it acknowledge a superior rule, judgment, and testimony, and so cannot be that which our faith is ultimately resolved into. If it be exempted from that rule of trying the spirits, then,—(1.) It must produce the *grant of this exemption*, seeing the rule is extended generally unto all things and doctrines that relate unto *faith* or obedience. (2.) It must declare what are the grounds and evidences of its own αὐτοπιστία, or "self-credibility," and how it may be infallibly or assuredly distinguished from all delusions; which can never be done. And if any tolerable countenance could be given unto these things, yet we shall show immediately that no such *private testimony*, though real, can be the formal object of faith or reason of believing.

3. It hath so fallen out, in the *providence of God*, that generally all who have given up themselves, in any things concerning faith or obedience, unto the *pretended conduct of immediate revelations*, although they have pleaded a respect unto the Scripture also, have been seduced into opinions and practices directly repugnant unto it; and this, with all persons of sobriety, is sufficient to discard this pretence.

But this *internal testimony of the Spirit* is by others explained quite in another way; for they say that besides the work of the Holy Ghost before insisted on, whereby he takes away our *natural blindness*, and, enlightening our minds, enables us to discern the

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divine excellencies that are in the Scripture, there is another internal efficiency of his, whereby we are moved, persuaded, and enabled to believe. Hereby we are taught of God, so as that, finding the glory and majesty of God in the word, our hearts do, by an ineffable power, assent unto the truth without any hesitation. And this work of the Spirit carrieth its own evidence in itself, producing an assurance above all human judgment, and such as stands in need of no farther arguments or testimonies. This faith rests on and is resolved into. And this some learned men seem to embrace, because they suppose that the *objective evidence* which is given in the Scripture itself is only moral, or such as can give only a moral assurance. Whereas, therefore, faith ought to be divine and supernatural, so must that be whereinto it is resolved; yea, it is so alone from the *formal reason* of it. And they can apprehend nothing in this work that is immediately divine but only this *internal testimony of the Spirit*, wherein God himself speaks unto our hearts.

But yet neither, as it is so explained, can we allow it to be the formal object of faith, nor that wherein it doth acquiesce; for,—

1. It hath not the proper *nature of a divine testimony.* A divine *work* it may be, but a divine *testimony* it is not; but it is of the nature of faith to be built on an external testimony. However, therefore, our minds may be established, and enabled to believe firmly and steadfastly, by an ineffable internal work of the Holy Ghost, whereof also we may have a certain experience, yet neither that work nor the effect of it can be the reason why we do believe nor whereby we are moved to believe, but only that whereby we do believe.

2. That which is the *formal object of faith*, or reason whereon we believe, is the same, *and common unto all that do believe;* for our inquiry is not how or by what means this or that man came *to believe*, but why any one or every one *ought so to do* unto whom the Scripture is proposed. The object proposed unto all to be believed is the same; and the faith required of all in a way of duty is the same, or of the same kind and nature; and therefore the reason why we believe must be the same also. But, on this supposition, there must be as many distinct reasons of believing as there are believers.

3. On this supposition, it cannot be the duty of any one to believe the Scripture to be the word of God who hath not received this *internal testimony of the Spirit;* for where the true formal reason of believing is not proposed unto us, there it is not our duty to believe. Wherefore, although the Scripture be proposed as the word of God, yet is it not our duty to believe it so to be until we have this work of the Spirit in our hearts, in case that be the formal reason of believing. But not to press any farther how it is possible men may be deceived and deluded in their apprehensions of such an internal

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testimony of the Spirit, especially if it be not to be tried by the Scripture,—which if it be, it loseth its αὐτοπιστία, or "self-credibility," or if it be, it casteth us into a circle, which the Papists charge us withal,—it cannot be admitted as the formal object of our faith, because it would divert us from that which is public, proper, every way certain and infallible.

However, that work of the Spirit which may be called an *internal real testimony* is to be granted as that which belongs unto the stability and assurance of faith; for if he did no otherwise work in us or upon us but by the communication of spiritual light unto our minds, enabling us to discern the evidences that are in the Scripture of its own divine original, we should often be shaken in our assent and moved from our stability: for whereas our spiritual darkness is removed but in part, and at best, whilst we are here, we see things but darkly, as in a glass, all things believed having some sort of inevidence or obscurity attending them; and whereas temptations will frequently shake and disturb the due respect of the faculty unto the object, or interpose mists and clouds between them,—we can have no assurance in believing, unless our minds are farther established by the Holy Ghost. He doth, therefore, two ways assist us in believing, and ascertain our minds of the things believed, so as that we may hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm and steadfast unto the end; for,—

1. He gives unto believers a *spiritual sense* of the *power and reality of the things believed*, whereby their faith is greatly established; and although the divine witness, whereunto our faith is ultimately resolved, doth not consist herein, yet it is the greatest corroborating testimony whereof we are capable. This is that which brings us unto the "riches of the full assurance of understanding," Col. ii. 2; as also 1 Thess. i. 5. And on the account of this spiritual experience is our perception of spiritual things so often expressed by acts of sense, as tasting, seeing, feeling, and the like means of assurance in things natural. And when believers have attained hereunto, they do find the divine wisdom, goodness, and authority of God so present unto them as that they need neither argument, nor motive, nor any thing else, to persuade them unto or confirm them in believing. And whereas this spiritual experience, which believers obtain through the Holy Ghost, is such as cannot rationally be contended about, seeing those who have received it cannot fully express it, and those who have not cannot understand it, nor the efficacy which it hath to secure and establish the mind, it is left to be determined on by them alone who have their "senses exercised to discern good and evil." And this belongs unto the internal subjective testimony of the Holy Ghost.

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2. He assists, helps, and relieves us, against *temptations to the contrary*, so as that they shall not be prevalent. Our first *prime assent* unto the divine authority of the Scripture, upon its proper grounds and reasons, will not secure us against future objections and temptations unto the contrary, from all manner of causes and occasions. David's faith was so assaulted by them as that "he said in his haste that all men were liars;" and Abraham himself, after he had received the promise that "in his seed all nations should be blessed," was reduced unto that anxious inquiry, "Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" Gen. xv. 2; and Peter was so winnowed by Satan, that although his faith failed not, yet he greatly failed and fainted in its exercise. And we all know what fears from within, what fightings from without, we are exposed unto in this matter. And of this sort are all those atheistical objections against the Scripture which these days abound withal, which the devil useth as fiery darts to inflame the souls of men and to destroy their faith; and, indeed, this is that work which the powers of hell are principally engaged in at this day. Having lopped off many branches, they now lay their axe to the root of faith; and hence, in the midst of the profession of Christian religion, there is no greater controversy than whether the Scriptures are the word of God or not. Against all these temptations doth the Holy Ghost give in such a continual supply of spiritual strength and assistance unto believers as that they shall at no time prevail, nor their faith totally fail. In such cases the Lord Christ intercedes for us that our faith fail not, and God's grace is sufficient against the buffetings of these temptations; and herein the fruit of Christ's intercession, with the grace of God and its efficiency, are communicated unto us by the Holy Ghost. What are those internal aids whereby he establisheth and assureth our minds against the force and prevalency of objections and temptations against the divine authority of the Scripture, how they are communicated unto us and received by us, this is no place to declare in particular. It is in vain for any to pretend unto the name of Christians by whom they are denied. And these also have the nature of an internal, real testimony, whereby faith is established.

And because it is somewhat strange that, after a long, quiet possession of the professed faith, and assent of the generality of the minds of men thereunto, there should now arise among us such an open opposition unto *the divine authority of the Scriptures* as we find there is by experience, it may not be amiss in our passage to name the principal causes or occasions hereof; for if we should bring them all into one reckoning, as justly we may, who either openly oppose it and reject it, or who use it or neglect it at their pleasure, or who set up other guides in competition with it or above it, or otherwise

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declare that they have no sense of the immediate authority of God therein, we shall find them to be like the Moors or slaves in some countries or plantations,—they are so great in number and force above their rulers and other inhabitants, that it is only want of communication, with confidence, and some distinct interests, that keep them from casting off their yoke and restraint. I shall name three causes only of this surprising and perilous event:—

1. A long-continued *outward profession* of the truth of the Scripture, without an *inward experience of its power*, betrays men at length to question the truth itself, at least not to regard it as divine. The owning of the Scripture to be the word of God bespeaks a divine majesty, authority, and power, to be present in it and with it. Wherefore, after men who have for a long time so professed do find that they never had any real experience of such a divine presence in it by any effects upon their own minds, they grow insensibly regardless of it, or allow it a very common place in their thoughts. When they have worn off the impressions that were on their minds from tradition, education, and custom, they do for the future rather not oppose it than in any way believe it. And when once a reverence unto the word of God on the account of its *authority* is lost, an assent unto it on the account of its *truth* will not long abide. And all such persons, under a concurrence of temptations and outward occasions, will either reject it or prefer other guides before it.

2. The *power of lust*, rising up unto a resolution of living in those sins whereunto the Scripture doth unavoidably annex eternal ruin, hath prevailed with many to cast off its authority: for whilst they are resolved to live in an outrage of sin, to allow a divine truth and power in the Scripture is to cast themselves under a present torment, as well as to ascertain their future misery; for no other can be his condition who is perpetually sensible that God always condemns him in all that he doth, and will assuredly take vengeance on him,—which is the constant language of the Scripture concerning such persons. Wherefore, although they will not immediately fall into an open atheistical opposition unto it, as that which, it may be, is not consistent with their interest and reputation in the world, yet, looking upon it as the devils did on Jesus Christ, as that which "comes to torment them before the time," they keep it at the greatest distance from their thoughts and minds, until they have habituated themselves unto a contempt of it. There being, therefore, an utter impossibility of giving any pretence of reconciliation between the owning of the Scripture to be the word of God, and a resolution to live in an excess of known sin, multitudes suffer their minds to be bribed by their corrupt affections to a relinquishment of any regard unto it.

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3. The scandalous quarrels and disputations of those of the church of Rome against the Scripture and its authority have contributed much unto the ruin of the faith of many. Their great design is, by all means to secure the power, authority, and infallibility of their church. Of these they say continually, as the apostle in another case of the mariners, "Unless these stay in the ship, we cannot be saved." Without an acknowledgment of these things, they would have it that men can neither at present believe nor be saved hereafter. To secure this interest, the authority of the Scripture must be by all means questioned and impaired. A divine authority in itself they will allow it, but with respect unto us it hath none but what it obtains by the suffrage and testimony of their church. But whereas authority is ἐκ τῶν πρός τι, and consists essentially in the relation and respect which it hath unto others, or those that are to be subject unto it, to say that it hath an authority in itself but none towards us, is not only to deny that it hath any authority at all, but also to reproach it with an empty name. They deal with it as the soldiers did with Christ: they put a crown on his head, and clothed him with a purple robe, and bowing the knee before him mocked him, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" They ascribe unto it the crown and robe of divine authority in itself, but not towards any one person in the world. So, if they please, God shall be God, and his word be of some credit among men. Herein they seek continually to entangle those of the weaker sort by urging them vehemently with this question, "How do you know the Scripture to be the word of God?" and have in continual readiness a number of sophistical artifices to weaken all evidences that shall be pleaded in its behalf. Nor is that all, but on all occasions they insinuate such objections against it, from its obscurity, imperfection, want of order, difficulties, and seeming contradictions in it, as are suited to take off the minds of men from a firm assent unto it or reliance on it; as if a company of men should conspire, by crafty multiplied insinuations, divulged on all advantages, to weaken the reputation of a chaste and sober matron, although they cannot deprive her of her virtue, yet, unless the world were wiser than for the most part it appears to be, they will insensibly take off from her due esteem. And this is as bold an attempt as can well be made in any case; for the first tendency of these courses is to make men atheists, after which success it is left at uncertain hazard whether they will be Papists or no. Wherefore, as there can be no greater nor more dishonourable reflection made on Christian religion than that it hath no other evidence or testimony of its truth but the authority and witness of those by whom it is at present professed, and who have notable worldly advantages thereby; so the minds of multitudes are secretly

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influenced by the poison of these disputes to think it no way necessary to believe the Scripture to be the word of God, or at least are shaken off from the grounds whereon they have professed it so to be. And the like disservice is done unto faith and the souls of men by such as advance a light within, or immediate inspiration, into competition with it or the room of it; for as such imaginations take place and prevail in the minds of men, so their respect unto the Scripture and all sense of its divine authority do decay, as experience doth openly manifest.

It is, I say, from an unusual concurrence of these and the like causes and occasions that there is at present among us such a decay in, relinquishment of, and opposition unto the belief of the Scripture, as, it may be, former ages could not parallel.

But against all these objections and temptations the minds of true believers are secured, by supplies of spiritual light, wisdom, and grace from the Holy Ghost.

There are several other especial gracious actings of the Holy Spirit on the minds of believers, which belong also unto this internal real testimony whereby their faith is established. Such are his "anointing" and "sealing" of them, his "witnessing with them," and his being an "earnest" in them; all which must be elsewhere spoken unto. Hereby is our faith every day more and more increased and established. Wherefore, although no internal work of the Spirit can be the formal reason of our faith, or that which it is resolved into, yet is it such as without it we can never sincerely believe as we ought, nor be established in believing against temptations and objections.

And with respect unto this work of the Holy Ghost it is that divines at the first reformation did generally resolve our faith of the divine authority of the Scripture into the testimony of the Holy Spirit. But this they did not do exclusively unto the proper use of external arguments and motives of credibility, whose store indeed is great, and whose fountain is inexhaustible; for they arise from all the undubitable notions that we have of God or ourselves, in reference unto our present duty or future happiness. Much less did they exclude that evidence thereof which the Holy Ghost gives unto it in and by itself. Their judgment is well expressed in the excellent words of one of them. "Maneat ergo," saith he, "hoc fixum, quos Spiritus sanctus intus docuit, solidè acquiescere in Scriptura, et hanc quidem esse αὐτόπιστον, neque demonstrationi et rationibus subjici eam fas esse: quam tamen meretur apud nos certitudinem *Spiritus* testimonio consequi. Etsi enim reverentiam sua sibi ultro majestate conciliat, tunc tamen demum serio nos afficit, quum per *Spiritum* obsignata est cordibus nostris. Illius ergo veritate illuminati, jam non aut nostro, aut aliorum judicio credimus a Deo esse Scripturam; sed

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supra humanum judicium, certo certius constituimus (non secus ac si ipsius Dei numen illic intueremur) hominum ministerio, ab ipsissimo Dei ore ad nos fluxisse. Non argumenta, non verisimilitudines quærimus, quibus judicium nostrum incumbat; sed ut rei extra æstimandi aleam positæ, judicium ingeniumque nostrum subjicimus. . . . Neque qualiter superstitionibus solent miseri homines captivam mentem addicere: sed quia non dubiam vim numinis illic sentimus vigere ac spirare, qua ad parendum, scientes ac volentes, vividius tamen et efficacius quam pro humana aut voluntate aut scientia trahimur et accendimur. . . . Talis ergo est *persuasio* quæ rationes non requirat: talis *notitia*, cui optima ratio constet, nempe, in qua securius constantiusque mens quiescit quam in ullis rationibus: talis denique *sensus*, qui nisi ex cœlesti revelatione nasci nequeat. *Non* aliud loquor quam quod apud se experitur fidelium unusquisque, nisi quod longe infra justam rei explicationem verba subsidunt."—Calv. Instit., lib. i. cap. 7, sec. 5.

And we may here briefly call over what we have attained or passed through: for,—1. We have showed, in general, both what is the nature of divine revelation and divine illumination, with their mutual respect unto one another; 2. What are the principal external arguments or motives of credibility whereby the Scripture may be proved to be of a divine original; 3. What kind of persuasion is the effect of them, or what is the assent which we give unto the truth of the Scriptures on their account; 4. What objective evidence there is unto reason in the doctrine of the Scriptures to induce the mind to assent unto them; 5. What is the nature of that faith whereby we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, and how it is wrought in us by the Holy Ghost; 6. What is that internal testimony which is given unto the divine authority of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, and what is the force and use thereof. The principal part of our work doth yet remain.

CHAPTER V.

Divine revelation itself the only foundation and reason of faith.

THAT which we have thus far made way for, and which is now our only remaining inquiry is, What is the work of the Holy Ghost with respect unto the objective evidence which we have concerning the Scripture, that it is the word of God, which is the formal reason of our faith, and whereinto it is resolved?—that is, we come to inquire and to give a direct answer unto that question, Why we believe the Scripture to be the word of God? what it is that our faith rests upon herein? and what it is that makes it the duty of every man

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to believe it so to be unto whom it is proposed? And the reason why I shall be the briefer herein is, because I have long since, in another discourse, cleared this argument, and I shall not here again call over any thing that was delivered therein, because what hath been unto this day gainsaid unto it or excepted against it hath been of little weight or consideration. Unto this great inquiry, therefore, I say,—

We believe the Scripture to be the word of God with divine faith for its own sake only; or, our faith is resolved into the authority and truth of God only as revealing himself unto us therein and thereby. And this authority and veracity of God do infallibly manifest or evince themselves unto our faith, or our minds in the exercise of it, by the revelation itself in the Scripture, and no otherwise; or, "Thus saith the LORD," is the reason why we ought to believe, and why we do so, why we believe at all in general, and why we believe any thing in particular. And this we call the formal object or reason of faith.

And it is evident that this is not God himself absolutely considered; for so he is only the material object of our faith: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is," Heb. xi. 6. Nor is it the truth of God absolutely; for that we believe as we do other essential properties of his nature. But it is the truth of God revealing himself his mind and will unto us in the Scripture. This is the sole reason why we believe any thing with divine faith.

It is or may be inquired, wherefore we do believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, or that God is one in nature, subsisting in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; I answer, It is because God himself, the first truth, who cannot lie, hath revealed and declared these things so to be, and he who is our all requireth us so to believe. If it be asked how, wherein, or whereby God hath revealed or declared these things so to be, or what is that revelation which God hath made hereof; I answer, It is the Scripture and that only. And if it be asked how I know this Scripture to be a divine revelation, to be the word of God; I answer,—1. I do not know it demonstratively, upon rational, scientifical principles, because such a divine revelation is not capable of such a demonstration, 1 Cor. ii. 9. 2. I do not assent unto it, or think it to be so, only upon arguments and motives highly probable, or morally uncontrollable, as I am assuredly persuaded of many other things whereof I can have no certain demonstration, 1 Thess. ii. 13. 3. But I believe it so to be with faith divine and supernatural, resting on and resolved into the authority and veracity of God himself, evidencing themselves unto my mind, my soul, and conscience, by this revelation itself, and not otherwise.

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Here we rest, and deny that we believe the Scripture to be the word of God formally for any other reason but itself, which assureth us of its divine authority. And if we rest not here, we must run on the rock of a moral certainty only, which shakes the foundation of all divine faith, or fall into the gulf and labyrinth of an endless circle, in proving two things mutually by one another, as the church by the Scripture and the Scripture by the church, in an everlasting rotation. Unless we intend so to wander, we must come to something wherein we may rest for its own sake, and that not with a strong and firm opinion, but with divine faith. And nothing can rationally pretend unto this privilege but the truth of God manifesting itself in the Scripture;—and therefore those who will not allow it hereunto do some of them wisely deny that the Scripture's being the word of God is the object of divine faith directly, but only of a moral persuasion from external arguments and considerations; and I do believe that they will grant, that if the Scripture be so to be believed, it must be for its own sake. For those who would have us to believe the Scripture to be the word of God upon the authority of the church, proposing it unto us and witnessing it so to be, though they make a fair appearance of a ready and easy way for the exercise of faith, yet when things come to be sifted and tried, they do so confound all sorts of things that they know not where to stand or abide. But it is not now my business to examine their pretences; I have done it elsewhere. I shall therefore prove and establish the assertion laid down, after I have made way to it by one or two previous observations:—

1. We suppose herein all the motives of credibility before mentioned,—that is, all the arguments "ab extra," which vehemently persuade the Scripture to be the word of God, and wherewith it may be protected against objections and temptations to the contrary. They have all of them their use, and may in their proper place be insisted on. Especially ought they to be pleaded when the Scripture is attacked by an atheism arising from the love and practice of those lusts and sins which are severely condemned therein, and threatened with the utmost vengeance. With others they may be considered as previous inducements unto believing, or concomitant means of strengthening faith in them that do believe. In the first way, I confess, to the best of my observation of things past and present, their use is not great, nor ever hath been in the church of God: for assuredly the most that do sincerely believe the divine original and authority of the Scripture do it without any great consideration of them, or being much influenced by them; and there are many who, as Austin speaks, are saved "simplicitate credendi," and not "subtilitate disputandi," that are not able to inquire much into them, nor

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yet to apprehend much of their force and efficacy, when they are proposed unto them. Most persons, therefore, are effectually converted to God, and have saving faith, whereby they believe the Scripture, and virtually all that is contained in it, before they have ever once considered them. And God forbid we should think that none believe the Scriptures aright but those who are able to apprehend and manage the subtile arguments of learned men produced in their confirmation! yea, we affirm, on the contrary, that those who believe them on no other grounds have, indeed, no true divine faith at all. Hence they were not of old insisted on for the ingenerating of faith in them to whom the word was preached, nor ordinarily are so to this day by any who understand what is their work and duty. But in the second way, wherever there is occasion from objections, oppositions, or temptations, they may be pleaded to good use and purpose; and they may do well to be furnished with them who are unavoidably exposed unto trials of that nature. For as for that course which some take, in all places and at all times, to be disputing about the Scriptures and their authority, it is a practice giving countenance unto atheism, and is to be abhorred of all that fear God; and the consequents of it are sufficiently manifest.

2. The ministry of the church, as it is the pillar and ground of truth, holding it up and declaring it, is in an ordinary way previously necessary unto believing; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." We believe the Scripture to be the word of God *for* itself alone, but not *by* itself alone. The ministry of the word is the means which God hath appointed for the declaration and making known the testimony which the Holy Spirit gives in the Scripture unto its divine original. And this is the ordinary way whereby men are brought to believe the Scripture to be the word of God. The church in its ministry owning, witnessing, and avowing it so to be, instructing all sorts of persons out of it, there is, together with a sense and apprehension of the truth and power of the things taught and revealed in it, faith in itself as the word of God ingenerated in them.

3. We do also here suppose the internal effectual work of the Spirit begetting faith in us, as was before declared, without which we can believe neither the Scriptures nor any thing else with faith divine, not for want of evidence in them, but of faith in ourselves.

These things being supposed, we do affirm, That it is the authority and truth of God, as manifesting themselves in the supernatural revelation made in the Scripture, that our faith ariseth from and is resolved into. And herein consists that testimony which the Spirit gives unto the word of God that it is so; for it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. The Holy Ghost being

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the immediate author of the whole Scripture, doth therein and thereby give testimony unto the divine truth and original of it, by the characters of divine authority and veracity impressed on it, and evidencing themselves in its power and efficacy. And let it be observed, that what we assert respects the revelation itself, the Scripture, the writing, *τὴν γραφήν*, and not merely the things written or contained in it. The arguments produced by some to prove the truth of the doctrines of the Scripture reach not the cause in hand: for our inquiry is not about believing the truths revealed, but about believing the revelation itself, the Scripture itself, to be divine; and this we do only because of the authority and veracity of the revealer, that is, of God himself, manifesting themselves therein.

To manifest this fully I shall do these things:—

1. Prove that our faith is so resolved into the Scripture as a divine revelation, and not into any thing else; that is, we believe the Scripture to be the word of God for its own sake, and not for the sake of any thing else whatever, either external arguments or authoritative testimony of men.

2. Show how or by what means the Scripture doth evidence its own divine original, or that the authority of God is so evidenced in it and by it as that we need no other formal cause or reason of our faith, whatever motives or means of believing we may make use of. And as to the first of these,—

1. That is the formal reason whereon we do believe which the Scripture proposeth as the only reason why we should so do, why it is our duty to do so, and whereunto it requireth our assent. Now, this is to itself as it is the word of God, and because it is so;—or, it proposeth the authority of God in itself, and that alone, which we are to acquiesce in; and the truth of God, and that alone, which our faith is to rest on and is resolved into. It doth not require us to believe it upon the testimony of any church, or on any other arguments that it gives us to prove that it is from God, but speaks unto us immediately in his name, and thereon requires faith and obedience.

Some, it may be, will ask whether this prove the Scripture to be the word of God, because it says so of itself, when any other writing may say the same; but we are not now giving arguments to prove unto others the Scripture to be the word of God, but only proving and showing what our own faith resteth on and is resolved into, or, at least, ought so to be. How it evidenceth itself unto our faith to be the word of God we shall afterwards declare. It is sufficient unto our present purpose that God requires us to believe the Scripture for no other reason but because it is his word, or a divine revelation from him; and if so, his authority and truth are the formal reason why we believe the Scripture or any thing contained in it. To this pur-

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pose do testimonies abound in particular, besides that general attestation which is given unto it in that sole preface of divine revelations, "Thus saith the LORD;" and therefore they are to be believed. Some of them we must mention:—

Deut. xxxi. 11–13, "When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God." It is plain that God here requireth faith and obedience of the whole people, men, women, and children. The inquiry is, what he requireth it unto. It is to this law, to this law written in the books of Moses, which was to be read unto them out of the book; at the hearing of which they were obliged to believe and obey. To evidence that law to be his, he proposeth nothing but itself. But it will be said, "That generation was sufficiently convinced that the law was from God by the miracles which they beheld in the giving of it;" but, moreover, it is ordered to be proposed unto children of future generations, who knew nothing, that they may hear, and learn to fear the Lord.

That which, by the appointment of God, is to be proposed unto them that know nothing, that they may believe, that is unto them the formal reason of their believing. But this is the written word: "Thou shalt read this law unto them which have not known any thing, that they may hear and learn," etc. Whatever use, therefore, there may be of other motives or testimonies to commend the law unto us, of the ministry of the church especially, which is here required unto the proposal of the word unto men, it is the law itself, or the written word, which is the object of our faith, and which we believe for its own sake. See also chap. xxix. 29, where "revealed things" are said to "belong unto us and our children, that we might do them,"—that is, receive them on the account of their divine revelation.

Isa. viii. 19, 20, "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The inquiry is, by what means men may come to satisfaction in their minds and consciences, or what their faith or trust is in. Two things are proposed unto this end:—(1.) Immediate diabolical revelations, real or pretended; (2.) The written word of God, "the law and the testimony." Hereunto are we sent, and that upon the account of its own

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authority alone, in opposition unto all other pretences of assurance or security. And the sole reason why any one doth not acquiesce by faith in the written word is, because he hath no mornings or light of truth shining on him. But how shall we know the law and testimony, this written word, to be the word of God, and believe it so to be, and distinguish it from every other pretended divine revelation that is not so? This is declared,—

Jer. xxiii. 28, 29, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD. Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" It is supposed that there are two persons in reputation for divine revelations, esteemed "prophets;"—one of them only pretends so to be, and declares the dreams of his own fancy, or the divinations of his own mind, as the word of God; the other hath the word of God, and declares it faithfully from him. Yea, but how shall we know the one from the other? Even as men know wheat from chaff, by their different natures and effects; for as false, pretended revelations are but as chaff, which every wind will scatter, so the true word of God is like a fire and like a hammer, is accompanied with such light, efficacy, and power, that it manifests itself unto the consciences of men so to be. Hereon doth God call us to rest our faith on it, in opposition unto all other pretences whatever.

2. But is it of this authority and efficacy in itself? See Luke xvi. 27–31, "Then he said" (the rich man in hell), "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him" (Lazarus, who was dead) "to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." The question here between Abraham and the rich man in this parable,—indeed between the wisdom of God and the superstitious contrivances of men,—is about the way and means of bringing those who are unbelievers and impenitent unto faith and repentance. He who was in hell apprehended that nothing would make them believe but a miracle, one rising from the dead and speaking unto them; which, or the like marvellous operations, many at this day think would have mighty power and influence upon them to settle their minds and change their lives. Should they see one "rise from the dead," and come and converse with them, this would convince them of the immortality of

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the soul, of future rewards and punishments, as giving them sufficient evidence thereof, so that they would assuredly repent and change their lives; but as things are stated, they have no sufficient evidence of these things, so that they doubt so far about them as that they are not really influenced by them. Give them but one real miracle, and you shall have them for ever. This, I say, was the opinion and judgment of him who was represented as in hell, as it is of many who are posting thither apace. He who was in heaven thought otherwise; wherein we have the immediate judgment of Jesus Christ given in this matter, determining this controversy. The question is about sufficient evidence and efficacy to cause us to believe things divine and supernatural; and this he determines to be in the written word, "Moses and the prophets." If he that will not, on the single evidence of the written word, believe [it] to be from God, or a divine revelation of his will, will never believe upon the evidence of miracles nor any other motives, then that written word contains in itself the entire formal reason of faith, or all that evidence of the authority and truth of God in it which faith divine and supernatural rests upon; that is, it is to be believed for its own sake. But saith our Lord Jesus Christ himself, "If men will not hear," that is, believe, "Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead," and come and preach unto them,—a greater miracle than which they could not desire. Now, this could not be spoken if the Scripture did not contain in itself the whole entire formal reason of believing; for if it have not this, something necessary unto believing would be wanting, though that were enjoyed. And this is directly affirmed,—

John xx. 30, 31, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." The signs which Christ wrought did evidence him to be the Son of God. But how come we to know and believe these signs? what is the way and means thereof? Saith the blessed apostle, "These things are *written*, that ye might believe;"—"This writing of them by divine inspiration is so far sufficient to beget and assure faith in you, as that thereby you may have eternal life through Jesus Christ:" for if the writing of divine things and revelations be the means appointed of God to cause men to believe unto eternal life, then it must, as such, carry along with it sufficient reason why we should believe, and grounds whereon we should do so. And in like manner is this matter determined by the apostle Peter,—

2 Pet. i. 16–21, "We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our

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Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The question is about the gospel, or the declaration of the powerful coming of Jesus Christ, whether it were to be believed or no; and if it were, upon what grounds. Some said it was a "cunningly-devised fable;" others, that it was a fanatical story of madmen, as Festus thought of it when preached by Paul, Acts xxvi. 24; and very many are of the same mind still. The apostles, on the contrary, averred that what was spoken concerning him were "words of truth and soberness," yea, "faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptation," 1 Tim. i. 15; that is, to be believed for its worth and truth. The grounds and reasons hereof are two:—(1.) The testimony of the apostles, who not only conversed with Jesus Christ and were "eye-witnesses of his majesty," beholding his glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14, which they gave in evidence of the truth of the gospel, 1 John i. 1, but also heard a miraculous testimony given unto him immediately from God in heaven, 2 Pet. i. 17, 18. This gave them, indeed, sufficient assurance; but whereinto shall they resolve their faith who heard not this testimony? Why, they have "a more sure" (that is, a *most* sure) "word of prophecy,"—that is, the written word of God, that is sufficient of itself to secure their faith in this matter, especially as confirmed by the testimony of the apostles; whereby the church comes to be "built" in its faith "on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," Eph. ii. 20. But why should we believe this word of prophecy? may not that also be a "cunningly-devised fable," and the whole Scripture be but the suggestions of men's private spirits, as is objected, 2 Pet. i. 20? All is finally resolved into this, that the writers of it were immediately "moved" or acted "by the Holy Ghost;" from which divine original it carrieth along its own evidence with it. Plainly, that which the apostle teacheth us is, that we believe all other divine truths for the Scripture's sake, or because they are declared therein; but the Scripture we believe for its own sake, or because "holy men of God" wrote it "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

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So is the whole object of faith proposed by the same apostle, 2 Pet. iii. 2, "The words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour." And because our faith is resolved into them, we are said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," as was said, Eph. ii. 20; that is, our faith rests solely, as on its proper foundation, which bears the weight of it, on the authority and truth of God in their writings. Hereunto we may add that of Paul,—

Rom. xvi. 25, 26, "According to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith." The matter to be believed is the mystery of the gospel, which was kept secret since the world began, or from the giving of the first promise; not absolutely, but with respect unto that full manifestation which it hath now received. This God commands to be believed; the everlasting God, he who hath sovereign authority over all, requires faith in a way of obedience hereunto. But what ground or reason have we to believe it? This alone is proposed, namely, the divine revelation made in the preaching of the apostles and writings of the prophets; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17. This course, and no other, did our Saviour, even after his resurrection, take to beget and confirm faith in the disciples, Luke xxiv. 25–27. That great testimony to this purpose, 2 Tim. iii. 15–17, I do not plead in particular, because I have so fully insisted on it in another discourse.

From these and many other testimonies to the same purpose which might be produced, it is evident,—

1. That it is the Scripture itself, the word or will of God as revealed or written, which is proposed unto us as the object of our faith and obedience, which we are to receive and believe with faith divine and supernatural.

2. That no other reason is proposed unto us either as a motive to encourage us, or as an argument to assure us that we shall not be mistaken, but only its own divine original and authority, making our duty necessary and securing our faith infallibly. And those testimonies are with me of more weight a thousand times than the plausible reasonings of any to the contrary. With some, indeed, it is grown a matter of contempt to quote or cite the Scripture in our writings, such reverence have they for the ancient fathers, some of whose writings are nothing else but a perpetual contexture of Scripture. But for such who pretend to despise those testimonies in this case, it is because either they do not understand what they are produced to confirm or cannot answer the proof that is in them; for it

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is not unlikely but that some persons, well-conceited of their own understanding in things wherein they are most ignorant, will pride and please themselves in the ridiculousness of proving the Scripture to be the word of God by testimonies taken out of it. But, as was said, we must not forego the truth because either they will not or cannot understand what we discourse about.

Our assertion is confirmed by the uniform practice of the prophets and apostles, and all the penmen of the Scripture, in proposing those divine revelations which they received by immediate inspiration from God; for that which was the reason of their faith unto whom they first declared those divine revelations is the reason of our faith now they are recorded in the Scripture, for the writing of it being by God's appointment, it comes into the room and supplies the place of their oral ministry. On what ground soever men were obliged to receive and believe divine revelations when made unto them by the prophets and apostles, on the same are we obliged to receive and believe them now they are made unto us in the Scripture, the writing being by divine inspiration, and appointed as the means and cause of our faith. It is true, God was pleased sometimes to bear witness unto their personal ministry by miracles or signs and wonders, as Heb. ii. 4, "God bearing them witness;" but this was only at some seasons, and with some of them. That which they universally insisted on, whether they wrought any miracles or no, was, that the word which they preached, declared, wrote, was "not the word of man," came not by any private suggestion, or from any invention of their own, but was "indeed the word of God," 1 Thess. ii. 13, and declared by them as they were "acted by the Holy Ghost," 2 Pet. i. 21.

Under the Old Testament, although the prophets sometimes referred persons unto the word already written, as that which their faith was to acquiesce in, Isa. viii. 20, Mal. iv. 4, setting out its power and excellency for all the ends of faith and obedience, Ps. xix. 7–9, cxix., and not to any thing else, nor to any other motives or arguments to beget and require faith, but its own authority only; yet as to their own especial messages and revelations, they laid the foundation of all the faith and obedience which they required in this alone, "Thus saith the LORD, the God of truth." And under the New Testament, the infallible preachers and writers thereof do in the first place propose the writings of the Old Testament to be received for their own sake, or on the account of their divine original: see John i. 45; Luke xvi. 29, 31; Matt. xxi. 42; Acts xviii. 24, 25, 28, xxiv. 14, xxvi. 22; 2 Pet. i. 21. Hence are they called "The oracles of God," Rom. iii. 2; and oracles always required an assent for their own sake, and other evidence they pleaded none.

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And for the revelations which they superadded, they pleaded that they had them immediately from God "by Jesus Christ," Gal. i. 1. And this was accompanied with such an infallible assurance in them that received them as to be preferred above a supposition of the highest miracle to confirm any thing to the contrary, chap. i. 8; for if an angel from heaven should have preached any other doctrine than what they revealed and proposed in the name and authority of God, they were to esteem him accursed. For this cause they still insisted on their apostolical authority and mission, which included infallible inspiration and direction, as the reason of the faith of them unto whom they preached and wrote. And as for those who were not themselves divinely inspired, or wherein those that were so did not act by immediate inspiration, they proved the truth of what they delivered by its consonancy unto the Scriptures already written, referring the minds and consciences of men unto them for their ultimate satisfaction, Acts xviii. 28, xxviii. 23.

It was before granted that there is required, as subservient unto believing, as a *means* of it, or for the resolution of our faith into the authority of God in the Scriptures, the *ministerial proposal* of the Scriptures and the truths contained in them, with the command of God for obedience unto them, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. This ministry of the church, either extraordinary or ordinary, God hath appointed unto this end, and ordinarily it is indispensable thereunto: chap. x. 14, 15, "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Without this ordinarily we cannot believe the Scripture to be the word of God, nor the things contained in it to be from him, though we do not believe either the one or the other for it. I do grant that in extraordinary cases outward providences may supply the room of this ministerial proposal; for it is all one, as unto our duty, by what means the Scripture is brought unto us. But upon a supposition of this ministerial proposal of the word, which ordinarily includes the whole duty of the church in its testimony and declaration of the truth, I desire to know whether those unto whom it is proposed are obliged, without farther external evidence, to receive it as the word of God, to rest their faith on it, and submit their consciences unto it? The rule seems plain, that they are obliged so to do, Mark xvi. 16. We may consider this under the distinct ways of its proposal, extraordinary and ordinary.

Upon the preaching of any of the prophets by immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, or on their declaration of any *new revelation* they had from God, by preaching or writing, suppose Isaiah or Jeremiah, I desire to know whether or no all persons were bound to receive their doctrine as from God, to *believe* and submit unto the

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authority of God in the revelation made by him, without any *external* motives or arguments, or the testimony or authority of the church witnessing thereunto? If they were not, then were they all excused as guiltless who refused to believe the message they declared in the name of God, and in despising the *warnings* and *instructions* which they gave them; for external motives they used not, and the *present church* mostly condemned them and their *ministry*, as is plain in the case of Jeremiah. Now, it is impious to imagine that those to whom they spake in the name of God were not obliged to believe them, and it tends to the overthrow of all religion. If we shall say that they were obliged to believe them, and that under the penalty of divine displeasure, and so to receive the revelation made by them, on their declaration of it, as the *word of God*, then it must contain in it the formal *reason* of believing, or the full and entire cause, reason, and ground why they ought to believe with faith divine and supernatural. Or let another ground of faith in this case be assigned.

Suppose the proposal be made in the *ordinary* ministry of the church. Hereby the Scripture is declared unto men to be the *word of God;* they are acquainted with it, and with what God requires of them therein; and they are charged in the name of God to receive and believe it. Doth any obligation unto believing hence arise? It may be some will say that immediately there is not; only they will grant that men are bound hereon to *inquire* into such *reasons* and *motives* as are proposed unto them for its reception and admission. I say there is no doubt but that men are obliged to consider all things of that nature which are proposed unto them, and not to receive it with *brutish, implicit belief;* for the receiving of it is to be an act of men's own minds or understandings, on the best grounds and evidences which the nature of the thing proposed is capable of. But supposing men to do their duty in their diligent inquiries into the whole matter, I desire to know whether, by the proposal mentioned, there come upon men an obligation to believe? If there do not, then are all men perfectly innocent who refuse to receive the gospel in the preaching of it, as to any respect unto *that preaching;* which to say is to overthrow the whole dispensation of the ministry. If they are obliged to *believe* upon the preaching of it, then hath the word in itself those *evidences* of its divine original and authority which are a sufficient ground of faith or reason of believing; for what God requires us to believe upon hath so always.

As the issue of this whole discourse, it is affirmed that our faith is built on and resolved into the *Scripture itself*, which carries with it its own evidence of being a divine revelation; and therefore doth that faith ultimately rest on the *truth and authority of God alone*,

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and not on any human testimony, such as is that of the church, nor on any rational arguments or motives that are absolutely fallible.

CHAPTER VI.

The nature of divine revelations—Their self-evidencing power considered, particularly that of the Scriptures as the word of God.

IT may be said that if the Scripture thus *evidence* itself to be the word of God, as the sun manifesteth itself by light and fire by heat, or as the first principles of reason are evident in themselves without farther proof or testimony, then every one, and all men, upon the proposal of the Scripture unto them, and its own bare assertion that it is the word of God, would necessarily, on that evidence alone, assent thereunto, and believe it so to be. But this is not so; all experience lieth against it; nor is there any pleadable ground of reason that so it is, or that so it ought to be.

In answer unto this objection I shall do these two things:—

1. I shall show what it is, what power, what faculty in the minds of men, whereunto this revelation is proposed, and whereby we assent unto the truth of it; wherein the mistakes whereon this objection proceedeth will be discovered.

2. I shall mention some of those things whereby the Holy Ghost testifieth and giveth evidence unto the Scripture in and by itself, so as that our faith may be immediately resolved into the veracity of God alone.

1. And, in the first place, we may consider that there are *three ways* whereby we *assent* unto any thing that is proposed unto us as true, and receive it as such:—

(1.) By inbred principles of *natural light*, and the first rational actings of our minds. This in *reason* answers *instinct* in irrational creatures. Hence God complains that his people did neglect and sin against their own natural light and first dictates of reason, whereas brute creatures would not forsake the conduct of the instinct of their natures, Isa. i. 3. In general, the mind is necessarily determined to an assent unto the proper objects of these principles; it cannot do otherwise. It cannot but assent unto the prime dictates of the light of nature, yea, those dictates are nothing but its assent. Its first *apprehension* of the things which the light of nature embraceth, without either express reasonings or farther consideration, is this assent. Thus doth the mind embrace in itself the general notions of moral good and evil, with the difference between them, however it practically complies not with what they guide unto, Jude 10. And

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so doth it assent unto many principles of reason, as that the whole is greater than the part, without admitting any debate about them.

(2.) By *rational consideration* of things externally proposed unto us. Herein the mind exerciseth its discursive faculty, gathering one thing out of another, and concluding one thing from another; and hereon is it able to assent unto what is proposed unto it in *various degrees of certainty*, according unto the nature and degree of the evidence it proceeds upon. Hence it hath a *certain knowledge* of some things; of others, an *opinion* or persuasion prevalent against the objections to the contrary, which it knows, and whose force it understands, which may be true or false.

(3.) By *faith*. This respects that power of our minds whereby we are able to assent unto any thing as true which we have no first principles concerning, no inbred notions of, nor can from more known principles make unto ourselves any certain rational conclusions concerning them. This is our assent *upon testimony*, whereon we believe many things which no sense, inbred principles, nor reasonings of our own, could either give us an acquaintance with or an assurance of. And this *assent* also hath not only *various degrees*, but is also of *divers kinds*, according as the *testimony* is which it ariseth from and resteth on; as being *human* if that be *human*, and *divine* if that be so also.

According to these distinct faculties and powers of our souls, God is pleased to reveal or make known himself, his mind or will, *three ways* unto us: for he hath implanted no power in our minds, but the principal use and exercise of it are to be with respect unto himself and our living unto him, which is the end of them all; and a neglect of the improvement of them unto this end is the highest aggravation of sin. It is an aggravation of sin when men use the creatures of God otherwise than he hath appointed, or in not using them to his glory,—when they take his corn, and wine, and oil, and spend them on their lusts, Hosea ii. 8. It is a higher aggravation, when men in sinning abuse and dishonour their own bodies; for these are the principal external workmanship of God, being made for eternity, and whose preservation unto his glory is committed unto us in an especial manner. This the apostle declareth to be the peculiar aggravation of the sin of fornication, and uncleanness of any kind, 1 Cor. vi. 18, 19. But the height of impiety consists in the abuse of the faculties and powers of the soul, wherewith we are endowed purposely and immediately for the glorifying of God. Hence proceed unbelief, profaneness, blasphemy, atheism, and the like pollutions of the spirit or mind. And these are sins of the highest provocation; for the powers and faculties of our minds being given us only to enable us

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to live unto God, the diverting of their principal exercise unto other ends is an act of enmity against him and affront unto him.

(1.) He makes himself known unto us by the *innate principles of our nature*, unto which he hath communicated, as a power of apprehending, so an indelible sense of his being, his authority, and his will, so far as our natural dependence on him and moral subjection unto him do require: for whereas there are two things in this natural light and these first dictates of reason; first, a *power of conceiving*, discerning, and assenting; and, secondly, a *power of judging* and determining upon the things so discerned and assented unto, —by the one God makes known his being and essential properties, and by the other his sovereign authority over all.

As to the first, the apostle affirms that τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ φανερόν ἐστιν ἐν αὐτοῖς, Rom. i. 19,—"that which may be known of God" (his essence, being, subsistence, his natural, necessary, essential properties) "is manifest in them;" that is, it hath a self-evidencing power, acting itself in the minds of all men endued with natural light and reason. And as unto his *sovereign authority*, he doth evidence it in and by the *consciences of men;* which are the judgment that they make, and cannot but make, of themselves and their actions, with respect unto the authority and judgment of God, Rom. ii. 14, 15. And thus the mind doth assent unto the principles of God's being and authority, antecedently unto any actual exercise of the discursive faculty of reason, or other testimony whatever.

(2.) He doth it unto our *reason in its exercise*, by proposing such things unto its consideration as from whence it may and cannot but conclude in an assent unto the truth of what God intends to reveal unto us that way. This he doth by the works of creation and providence, which present themselves unavoidably unto reason in its exercise, to instruct us in the nature, being, and properties of God. Thus "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard," Ps. xix. 1–3. But yet they do not thus declare, evidence, and reveal the glory of God unto the first principles and notions of natural light without the actual exercise of reason. They only do so "when we consider his heavens, the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars, which he hath ordained," as the same psalmist speaks, Ps. viii. 3. A rational consideration of them, their greatness, order, beauty, and use, is required unto that testimony and evidence which God gives in them and by them unto himself, his glorious being and power. To this purpose the apostle discourseth at large concerning the works of creation, Rom. i. 20, 21, as also of those of providence, Acts xiv. 15–17, xvii. 24–28, and the

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rational use we are to make of them, verse 29. So God calls unto men for the exercise of their reason about these things, reproaching them with stupidity and brutishness where they are wanting therein, Isa. xlvi. 5–8, xliv. 18–20.

(3.) God reveals himself unto *our faith*, or that power of our souls whereby we are able to assent unto the truth of what is proposed unto us upon testimony. And this he doth by his word, or the Scriptures, proposed unto us in the manner and way before expressed.

He doth not reveal himself by his word unto the principles of natural light, nor unto reason in its exercise; but yet these principles, and reason itself, with all the faculties of our minds, are consequentially affected with that revelation, and are drawn forth into their proper exercise by it. But in the gospel the "righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17,—not to natural light, sense, or reason, in the first place; and it is faith that is "the evidence of things not seen," as revealed in the word, Heb. xi. 1. Unto this kind of revelation, "Thus saith the LORD" is the only ground and reason of our assent; and that assent is the assent of faith, because it is resolved into testimony alone.

And concerning these several ways of the communication or revelation of the knowledge of God, it must be always observed that there is a *perfect consonancy in the things revealed by them all.* If any thing pretends from the one what is absolutely contradictory unto the other, or our senses as the means of them, it is not to be received.

The foundation of the whole, as of all the actings of our souls, is in the inbred principles of natural light, or first necessary dictates of our intellectual, rational nature. This, so far as it extends, is a *rule unto our apprehension* in all that follows. Wherefore, if any pretend, in the exercise of reason, to conclude unto any thing concerning the nature, being, or will of God, that is directly *contradictory* unto those principles and dictates, it is no divine revelation unto our reason, but a *paralogism* from the defect of reason in its exercise. This is that which the apostle chargeth on and vehemently urgeth against the *heathen philosophers.* Inbred notions they had in themselves of the being and eternal power of God; and these were so manifest in them thereby that they could not but own them. Hereon they set their rational, *discursive faculty* at work in the consideration of God and his being; but herein were they so vain and foolish as to draw conclusions *directly contrary* unto the first principles of natural light, and the unavoidable notions which they had of the eternal being of God, Rom. i. 21–25. And many, upon their pretended rational consideration of the *promiscuous event of things* in the world, have foolishly concluded that all things had a *fortuitous beginning,*

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and have *fortuitous events*, or such as, from a concatenation of antecedent causes, are *fatally necessary*, and are not disposed by an infinitely wise, unerring, holy providence. And this also is directly *contradictory* unto the first principles and notions of natural light; whereby it openly proclaims itself not to be an effect of reason in its due exercise, but a mere delusion.

So if any pretend unto *revelations by faith* which are contradictory unto the first principles of natural light or reason, in its proper exercise about its proper objects, it is a delusion. On this ground the Roman doctrine of transubstantiation is justly rejected; for it proposeth that as a revelation by faith which is expressly contradictory unto our sense and reason, in their proper exercise about their proper objects. And a supposition of the possibility of any such thing would make the ways whereby God reveals and makes known himself to cross and interfere one with another; which would leave us no certainty in any thing, divine or human.

But yet as these means of divine revelation do *harmonize* and perfectly agree one with the other, so they are not *objectively equal*, or equally extensive, nor are they co-ordinate, but subordinate unto one another. Wherefore, there are many things discernible by reason in its exercise which do not appear unto the first principles of natural light. So the sober philosophers of old attained unto many true and great conceptions of God and the excellencies of his nature, above what they arrived unto who either did not or could not cultivate and improve the principles of natural light in the same manner as they did. It is, therefore, folly to pretend that things so made known of God are not infallibly true and certain, because they are not obvious unto the first conceptions of natural light, without the due exercise of reason, provided they are not contradictory thereunto. And there are many things revealed unto faith that are above and beyond the comprehension of reason in the best and utmost of its most proper exercise: such are all the principal mysteries of Christian religion. And it is the height of folly to reject them, as some do, because they are not discernible and comprehensible by reason, seeing they are not contradictory thereunto. Wherefore, these ways of God's revelation of himself are not equally extensive or commensurate, but are so subordinate one unto another that what is wanting unto the one is supposed by the other, unto the accomplishment of the whole and entire end of divine revelation; and the truth of God is the same in them all.

(1.) The revelation which God makes of himself in the first way, by the *inbred principles of natural light*, doth sufficiently and infallibly evidence itself to be from him; it doth it in, unto, and by those principles themselves. This revelation of God is infallible, the

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assent unto it is infallible, which the infallible evidence it gives of itself makes to be so. We dispute not now what a few atheistical sceptics pretend unto, whose folly hath been sufficiently detected by others. All the sobriety that is in the world consents in this, that the *light of the knowledge of God*, in and by the inbred principles of our minds and consciences, doth sufficiently, uncontrollably, and infallibly manifest itself to be from him; and that the mind neither is nor can be possibly imposed on in its apprehensions of that nature. And if the first dictates of reason concerning God do not *evidence themselves* to be from God, they are neither of any use nor force; for they are not capable of being confirmed by external arguments, and what is written about them is to show their force and evidence, not to give them any. Wherefore, this first way of God's revelation of himself unto us is infallible, and infallibly evidenceth itself in our minds, according to the capacity of our natures.

(2.) The revelation that God maketh of himself by the *works of creation and providence unto our reason in exercise*, or the faculties of our souls as *discursive*, concluding rationally one thing from another, doth sufficiently, yea, infallibly, evidence and demonstrate itself to be from him, so that it is impossible we should be deceived therein. It doth not do so unto the *inbred principles* of natural light, unless they are engaged in a *rational exercise* about the means of the revelation made. That is, we must rationally consider the works of God, both of creation and providence, or we cannot learn by them what God intends to reveal of himself. And in our doing so we cannot be deceived; for "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," Rom. i. 20. They are clearly seen, and therefore may be perfectly understood as to what they teach of God, without any possibility of mistake. And wherever men do not receive the revelation intended in the way intended, that is, do not certainly conclude that what God teaches by his works of creation and providence,—namely, his eternal power and Godhead, with the essential properties thereof, infinite wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and the like,—is certainly and infallibly so, believing it accordingly, it is not from any defect in the revelation, or its *self-evidencing* efficacy, but only from the depraved, vicious habits of their minds, their enmity against God, and dislike of him. And so the apostle saith that they who rejected or improved not the revelation of God did it "because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," Rom. i. 28; for which cause God did so severely revenge their natural unbelief, as is there expressed. See Isa. xlvi. 8, xliv. 19, 20. That which I principally insist on from hence is, that the revelation which God makes of himself, by the works of

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creation and providence, doth not evince itself unto the first principles of natural light, so as that an assent should be given thereunto, without the actual exercise of reason, or the discursive faculty of our minds about them, but thereunto it doth infallibly evidence itself. So may the Scripture have, and hath, a *self-evidencing efficacy*, though this appear not unto the light of first natural principles, no, nor to bare reason in its exercise; for,—

(3.) Unto our *faith* God reveals himself by the *Scripture*, or his word, which he hath *magnified above all his name*, Ps. cxxxviii. 2; that is, implanted in it more characters of himself and his properties than in any other way whereby he revealeth or maketh himself known unto us. And this revelation of God by his word, we confess, is not sufficient nor suited to *evidence itself* unto the *light of nature*, or the first principles of our understanding, so that, by bare proposal of it to be from God, we should by virtue of them immediately assent unto it, as men assent unto self-evident natural principles, as that the *part is less than the whole*, or the like. Nor doth it evidence itself unto our *reason*, in its mere natural exercise, as that by virtue thereof we can demonstratively conclude that it is from God, and that what is declared therein is certainly and infallibly true. It hath, indeed, such external evidences accompanying it as make a great impression on reason itself; but the power of our souls whereunto it is proposed is that whereby we can give an assent unto the truth upon the testimony of the proposer, whereof we have no other evidence. And this is the principal and most noble faculty and power of our nature. There is an instinct in brute creatures that hath some resemblance unto our inbred natural principles, and they will act that instinct, improved by experience, into a great likeness of reason in its exercise, although it be not so; but as unto the *power* or *faculty* of giving an assent unto things on witness or testimony, there is nothing in the nature of irrational creatures that hath the least shadow of it or likeness unto it. And if our souls did want but this one faculty of *assenting unto truth upon testimony*, all that remains would not be sufficient to conduct us through the affairs of this natural life. This, therefore, being the *most noble faculty* of our minds is that whereunto the highest way of divine revelation is proposed.

That our minds, in this especial case, to make our assent to be according unto the mind of God, and such as is required of us in a way of duty, are to be *prepared and assisted* by the Holy Ghost, we have declared and proved before. On this supposition, the revelation which God makes of himself by his word doth no less evidence itself unto our minds, *in the exercise of faith*, to be from him, or gives no less infallible evidence as a ground and reason why we

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should believe it to be from him, than his revelation of himself by the works of creation and providence doth manifest itself unto our minds in the exercise of reason to be from him, nor with less assurance than what we assent unto in and by the *dictates of natural light*. And when God revealeth himself,—that is, his "eternal power and Godhead,"—by "the things that are made," the works of creation, "the heavens declaring his glory, and the firmament showing his handywork," the reason of men, stirred up and brought into exercise thereby, doth infallibly conclude, upon the evidence that is in that revelation, that there is a God, and he eternally powerful and wise, without any farther arguments to prove the revelation to be true. So when God by his word reveals himself unto the minds of men, thereby exciting and bringing forth faith into exercise, or the power of the soul to assent unto truth upon testimony, that *revelation* doth no less *infallibly evidence* itself to be divine or from God, without any external arguments to prove it so to be. If I shall say unto a man that the sun is risen and shineth on the earth, if he question or deny it, and ask how I shall prove it, it is a sufficient answer to say that it *manifesteth itself* in and by its own light. And if he add that this is no proof to him, for he doth not discern it; suppose that to be so, it is a satisfactory answer to tell him that he is blind; and if he be not so, that it is to no purpose to argue with him who *contradicts his own sense*, for he leaves no *rule* whereby what is spoken may be tried or judged on. And if I tell a man that the "heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork," or that the "invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," and he shall demand how I prove it, it is a sufficient answer to say that these things, in and by themselves, do manifest unto the *reason of every man, in its due and proper exercise*, that there is an eternal, infinitely wise and powerful Being, by whom they were caused, produced, and made; so as that whosoever knoweth how to use and exercise his reasonable faculty in the consideration of them, their original, order, nature, and use, must necessarily conclude that so it is. If he shall say that it doth not so appear unto him that the being of God is so revealed by them, it is a sufficient reply, in case he be so indeed, to say he is *phrenetic*, and hath not the use of his *reason;* and if he be not so, that he argues in express contradiction unto his own reason, as may be demonstrated. This the heathen philosophers granted. "Quid enim potest," saith Cicero, "esse tam apertum, tamque perspicuum, cùm cœlum suspeximus, cœlestiaque contemplati sumus, quàm esse aliquod numen præstantissimæ mentis, quo hæc regantur? . . . . Quod qui dubitet, haud sane intelligo cur non idem, sol sit, an nullus sit, dubitare possit," De Natura Deor. lib. ii. 2.

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And if I declare unto any one that the *Scripture is the word of God*, a divine revelation, and that it doth evidence and manifest itself so to be, if he shall say that he hath the use and exercise of his sense and reason as well as others and yet it doth not appear unto him so to be, it is, as unto the present inquiry, a sufficient reply, for the security of the authority of the Scriptures, (though other means may be used for his conviction,) to say that "*all men have not faith*," by which alone the evidence of the divine authority of the Scripture is discoverable, in the light whereof alone we can read those characters of its divine *extract* which are impressed on it and communicated unto it.

If it be not so, seeing it is a *divine revelation*, and it is our duty to believe it so to be, it must be either because our faith is not fitted, suited, nor able to receive such an evidence, suppose God would give it unto the revelation of himself by his word, as he hath done unto those by the light of nature and works of providence, or because God would not or could not give such an evidence unto his word as might manifest itself so to be; and neither of these can be affirmed without a high reflection on the wisdom and goodness of God.

That our faith is capable of giving such an assent is evident from hence, because God works it in us and bestows it upon us for this very end; and God requireth of us that we should infallibly believe what he proposeth unto us, at least when we have infallible evidence that it is from him. And as he appointeth faith unto this end, and approveth of its exercise, so he doth both judge and condemn them who fail therein, 2 Chron. xx. 20; Isa. vii. 9; Mark xvi. 16. Yea, our faith is capable of giving an assent, though of another kind, more firm, and accompanied with more assurance, than any given by reason in the best of its conclusions; and the reason is, because the power of the mind to give assent upon testimony, which is its most noble faculty, is elevated and strengthened by the divine supernatural work of the Holy Ghost, before described.

To say that God either could not or would not give such a power unto the revelation of himself by his word as to evidence itself to be so is exceedingly prejudicial unto his honour and glory, seeing the everlasting welfare of the souls of men is incomparably more concerned therein than in the other ways mentioned. And what reason could be assigned why he should implant a less evidence of his divine authority on this than on them, seeing he designed far greater and more glorious ends in this than in them? If any one shall say, "The reason is, because this kind of divine revelation is not capable of receiving such evidences;" it must be either because there cannot be evident characters of divine authority, goodness, wisdom, power, implanted in it or mixed with it; or because an efficacy to manifest them cannot

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be communicated unto it. That both these are otherwise shall be demonstrated in the last part of this discourse, which I shall now enter upon.

It hath been already declared that it is the *authority and veracity of God, revealing themselves in the Scripture and by it, that is the formal reason of our faith, or supernatural assent unto it as it is the word of God.*

2. It remains only that we inquire, in the second place, into the way and means whereby they evidence themselves unto us, and the Scripture thereby to be the word of God, so as that we may undoubtedly and infallibly believe it so to be. Now, because faith, as we have showed, is an *assent upon testimony*, and consequently divine faith is an assent upon divine testimony, there must be some testimony or witness in this case whereon faith doth rest; and this we say is the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the author of the Scriptures, given unto them, in them, and by them. And this work or testimony of the Spirit may be reduced unto two heads, which may be distinctly insisted on:—

(1.) The *impressions* or *characters* which are *subjectively* left in the Scripture and upon it by the Holy Spirit, its author, of all the divine excellencies or properties of the divine nature, are the first means evidencing that testimony of the Spirit which our faith rests upon, or they do give the *first evidence* of its divine original and authority, whereon we do believe it. The way whereby we learn the eternal power and deity of God from the works of creation is no otherwise but by those marks, tokens, and impressions of his divine power, wisdom, and goodness, that are upon them; for from the consideration of their subsistence, greatness, order, and use, reason doth necessarily conclude an infinite subsisting Being, of whose power and wisdom these things are the manifest effects. These are clearly seen and understood by the things that are made. We need no other arguments to prove that God made the world but itself. It carrieth in it and upon it the infallible tokens of its original. See to this purpose the blessed meditation of the psalmist, Ps. civ. throughout. Now, there are greater and more evident impressions of divine excellencies left on the written word, from the infinite wisdom of the Author of it, than any that are communicated unto the works of God, of what sort soever. Hence David, comparing the works and the word of God, as to their instructive efficacy in declaring God and his glory, although he ascribes much unto the works of creation, yet doth he prefer the word incomparably before them, Ps. xix. 1–3, 7–9, cxlvii. 8, 9, etc., 19, 20. And these do manifest the word unto our faith to be his more clearly than the others do the works to be his unto our reason. As yet I do not know that it is denied by any, or the

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contrary asserted,—namely, that God, as the immediate author of the Scripture, hath left in the very word itself evident tokens and impressions of his wisdom, prescience, omniscience, power, goodness, holiness, truth, and other divine, infinite excellencies, sufficiently evidenced unto the enlightened minds of believers. Some, I confess, speak suspiciously herein, but until they will directly deny it, I shall not need farther to confirm it than I have done long since in another treatise.[1] And I leave it to be considered whether, morally speaking, it be possible that God should immediately by himself, from the eternal counsels of his will, reveal himself, his mind, the thoughts and purposes of his heart, which had been hidden in himself from eternity, on purpose that we should believe them and yield obedience unto him, according to the declaration of himself so made, and yet not give with it or leave upon it any τεκμήριον, any "infallible token," evidencing him to be the author of that revelation. Men who are not ashamed of their Christianity will not be so to profess and seal that profession with their blood, and to rest their eternal concernments on that security herein which they have attained,—namely, that there is that manifestation made of the glorious properties of God in and by the Scripture, as it is a divine revelation, which incomparably excels in evidence all that their reason receives concerning his power from the works of creation.

This is that whereon we believe the Scripture to be the word of God with *faith divine and supernatural*, if we believe it so at all: There is in itself that evidence of its *divine original*, from the characters of divine excellencies left upon it by its author, the Holy Ghost, as faith quietly rests in and is resolved into; and this evidence is manifest unto the meanest and most unlearned, no less than unto the wisest philosophers. And the truth is, if rational arguments and external motives were the sole ground of receiving the Scripture to be the word of God, it could not be but that learned men and philosophers would have always been the forwardest and most ready to admit it, and most firmly to adhere unto it and its profession; for whereas all such arguments do prevail on the minds of men according as they are able aright to discern their force and judge of them, learned philosophers would have had the advantage incomparably above others. And so some have of late affirmed that it was the wise, rational, and learned men who at first most readily received the gospel!—an assertion which nothing but gross ignorance of the Scripture itself, and of all the writings concerning the original of Christianity, whether of Christians or heathens, could give the least countenance unto. See 1 Cor. i. 23, 26. From hence is the Scripture so often compared unto light, called light, "a light shin-

[1] In the "Divine Original of Sacred Scripture."—Ed.

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ing in a dark place," which will evidence itself unto all who are not blind, nor do wilfully shut their eyes, nor have their "eyes blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;" which consideration I have handled at large elsewhere.

(2.) The Spirit of God evidenceth the *divine original and authority* of the Scripture by the power and authority which he puts forth in it and by it over the minds and consciences of men, with its operation of divine effects thereon. This the apostle expressly affirms to be the reason and cause of faith, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, "If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth." The acknowledgment and confession of God to be in them, or among them, is a profession of faith in the word administered by them. Such persons assent unto its divine authority, or believe it to be the word of God. And on what evidence or ground of credibility they did so is expressly declared. It was not upon the force of any external arguments produced and pleaded unto that purpose; it was not upon the testimony of this or that or any church whatever; nor was it upon a conviction of any miracles which they saw wrought in its confirmation; yea, the ground of the faith and confession declared is opposed unto the efficacy and use of the miraculous gifts of tongues, verses 23, 24. Wherefore, the only evidence whereon they received the word, and acknowledged it to be of God, was that divine power and efficacy whereof they found and felt the experience in themselves: "He is convinced of all, judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest;" whereon he falls down before it with an acknowledgment of its divine authority, finding the word to come upon his conscience with an irresistible power of conviction and judgment thereon. "He is convinced of all, judged of all;" he cannot but grant that there is θεῖόν τι, "a divine efficacy" in it or accompanying of it. Especially his mind is influenced by this, that the "secrets of his heart are made manifest" by it; for all men must acknowledge this to be an effect of divine power, seeing God alone is καρδιογνώστης, he who searcheth, knoweth, and judgeth the heart. And if the woman of Samaria believed that Jesus was the Christ because he "told her all things that ever she did," John iv. 29, there is reason to believe that word to be from God which makes manifest even the secrets of our hearts. And although I do conceive that by "The word of God," Heb. iv. 12, the living and eternal Word is principally intended, yet the power and efficacy there ascribed to him is that which he puts forth by the word of the gospel. And so that

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word also, in its place and use, "pierceth even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner," or passeth a critical judgment on "the thoughts and intents of the heart," or makes manifest the secrets of men's hearts, as it is here expressed. Hereby, then, doth the Holy Ghost so evidence the divine authority of the word, namely, by that divine power which it hath upon our souls and consciences, that we do assuredly acquiesce in it to be from God. So the Thessalonians are commended that they "received the word not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 13. It distinguisheth itself from the word of men, and evidences itself to be indeed the word of God, by its effectual operation in them that believe. And he who hath this testimony in himself hath a higher and more firm assurance of the truth than what can be attained by the force of external arguments or the credit of human testimony. Wherefore, I say in general, that the Holy Spirit giveth testimony unto and evinceth the divine authority of the word by its powerful operations and divine effects on the souls of them that do believe; so that although it be weakness and foolishness unto others, yet, as is Christ himself unto them that are called, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

And I must say, that although a man be furnished with external arguments of all sorts concerning the divine original and authority of the Scriptures, although he esteem his motives of credibility to be effectually persuasive, and have the authority of any or all the churches in the world to confirm his persuasion, yet if he have no experience in himself of its divine power, authority, and efficacy, he neither doth nor can believe it to be the word of God in a due manner,—with faith divine and supernatural. But he that hath this experience hath that testimony in himself which will never fail.

This will be the more manifest if we consider some few of those many instances wherein it exerts its power, or the effects which are produced thereby.

The principal divine effect of the word of God is in the conversion of the souls of sinners unto God. The greatness and glory of this work we have elsewhere declared at large. And all those who are acquainted with it, as it is declared in the Scripture, and have any experience of it in their own hearts, do constantly give it as an instance of the exceeding greatness of the power of God. It may be they speak not improperly who prefer the work of the new creation before the work of the old, for the express evidences of almighty power contained in it, as some of the ancients do. Now, of this great and glorious effect the word is the only instrumental cause, whereby the divine power operates and is expressive of itself: for we are

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"born again," born of God, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23; for "of his own will doth God beget us with the word of truth," James i. 18. The word is the seed of the new creature in us, that whereby our whole natures, our souls and all their faculties, are changed and renewed into the image and likeness of God; and by the same word is this new nature kept and preserved, 1 Pet. ii. 2, and the whole soul carried on unto the enjoyment of God. It is unto believers "an ingrafted word, which is able to save their souls," James i. 21; the "word of God's grace, which is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified," Acts xx. 32; and that because it is the "power of God unto salvation unto every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16. All the power which God puts forth and exerts, in the communication of that grace and mercy unto believers whereby they are gradually carried on and prepared unto salvation, he doth it by the word. Therein, in an especial manner, is the divine authority of the word evidenced, by the divine power and efficacy given unto it by the Holy Ghost. The work which is effected by it, in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of the souls of believers, doth evidence infallibly unto their consciences that it is not the word of man, but of God. It will be said, "This testimony is private in the minds only of them on whom this work is wrought," and therefore do I press it no farther, but "he that believeth hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. Let it be granted that all who are really converted unto God by the power of the word have that infallible evidence and testimony of its divine original, authority, and power in their own souls and consciences, that they thereon believe it with faith divine and supernatural, in conjunction with the other evidences before mentioned, as parts of the same divine testimony, and it is all I aim at herein.

But yet, although this testimony be privately received (for in itself it is not so, but common unto all believers), it is ministerially pleadable in the church as a principal motive unto believing. A declaration of the divine power which some have found by experience in the word is an ordinance of God to convince others and to bring them unto the faith; yea, of all the external arguments that are or may be pleaded to justify the divine authority of the Scripture, there is none more prevalent nor cogent than this of its mighty efficacy in all ages on the souls of men, to change, convert, and renew them into the image and likeness of God, which hath been visible and manifest.

Moreover, there are yet other particular effects of the divine power of the word on the minds and consciences of men, belonging unto this general work, either preceding or following it, which are clearly sensible, and enlarge the evidence; as,—

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(1.) The work of *conviction of sin* on those who expected it not, who desired it not, and who would avoid it if by any means possible they could. The world is filled with instances of this nature. Whilst men have been full of love to their sins, at peace in them, enjoying benefit and advantage by them, the word coming upon them in its power hath awed, disquieted, and terrified them, taken away their peace, destroyed their hopes, and made them, as it were, whether they would or no,—that is, contrary to their desires, inclinations, and carnal affections,—to conclude that if they comply not with what is proposed unto them in that word, which before they took no notice of nor had any regard unto, they must be presently or eternally miserable.

Conscience is the territory or dominion of God in man, which he hath so reserved unto himself that no human power can possibly enter into it or dispose of it in any wise. But in this work of *conviction of sin*, the word of God, the Scripture, entereth into the conscience of the sinner, takes possession of it, disposeth it unto peace or trouble, by its laws or rules, and no otherwise. Where it gives disquietment, all the world cannot give it peace; and where it speaks peace, there is none can give it trouble. Were not this the *word of God*, how should it come thus to speak in his name and to act his authority in the consciences of men as it doth? When once it begins this work, conscience immediately owns a *new rule*, a *new law*, a *new government*, in order to the judgment of God upon it and all its actions. And it is contrary to the nature of conscience to take this upon itself, nor would it do so but that it sensibly finds God speaking and acting in it and by it: see 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. An invasion may be made on the *outward duties* that conscience disposeth unto, but none can be so upon its *internal actings*. No power under heaven can cause conscience to think, act, or judge otherwise than it doth by its immediate respect unto God; for it is the mind's *self-judging* with respect unto God, and what is not so is no act of conscience. Wherefore, to force an act of conscience implies a contradiction. However it may be defiled, bribed, seared, and at length utterly debauched, admit of a superior power, a power above or over itself, under God, it cannot.

I know conscience may be prepossessed with prejudices, and, by education, with the insinuation of traditions, take on itself the power of false, corrupt, superstitious principles and errors, as means of conveying unto it a sense of divine authority; so is it with the Mohammedans and other false worshippers in the world. But the power of those divine convictions whereof we treat is manifestly different from such prejudicate opinions: for where these are not imposed on men by artifices and delusions easily discoverable, they prepossess their

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minds and inclinations by traditions, antecedently unto any right judgment they can make of themselves or other things, and they are generally wrapt up and condited [preserved] in their secular interests. The convictions we treat of come from without upon the minds of men, and that with a sensible power, prevailing over all their previous thoughts and inclinations. Those first affect, deceive, and delude the notional part of the soul, whereby conscience is insensibly influenced and diverted into improper respects, and is deceived as to its judging of the voice of God; these immediately principle the practical understanding and self-judging power of the soul. Wherefore, such opinions and persuasions are gradually insinuated into the mind, and are admitted insensibly without opposition or reluctancy, being never accompanied at their first admission with any secular disadvantage;—but these divine convictions by the word befall men, some when they think of nothing less and desire nothing less; some when they design other things, as the pleasing of their ears or the entertainment of their company; and some that go on purpose to deride and scoff at what should be spoken unto them from it. It might also be added unto the same purpose how confirmed some have been in their carnal peace and security by love of sin, with innumerable inveterate prejudices; what losses and ruin to their outward concernments many have fallen into by admitting of their convictions; what force, diligence, and artifices have been used to defeat them; what contribution of aid and assistance there hath been from Satan unto this purpose; and yet against all hath the divine power of the word absolutely prevailed and accomplished its whole designed effect. See 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; Jer. xxiii. 29; Zech. i. 6.

(2.) It doth it by the light that is in it, and that spiritual illuminating efficacy wherewith it is accompanied. Hence it is called a "light shining in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19; that light whereby God "shines in the hearts" and minds of men, 2 Cor. iv. 4, 6. Without the Scripture all the world is in darkness: "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people," Isa. lx. 2. It is the kingdom of Satan, filled with darkness and confusion. Superstition, idolatry, lying vanities, wherein men know not at all what they do nor whither they go, fill the whole world, even as it is at this day. And the minds of men are naturally in darkness; there is a blindness upon them that they cannot see nor discern spiritual things, no, not when they are externally proposed unto them, as I have at large evinced elsewhere;—and no man can give a greater evidence that it is so than he who denies it so to be. With respect unto both these kinds of darkness the Scripture is a light, and accompanied with a spiritual illuminating efficacy, thereby evidencing itself to be a divine revelation; for what but divine truth could recall the minds of

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men from all their wanderings in error, superstition, and other effects of darkness, which of themselves they love more than truth? All things being filled with vanity, error, confusion, misapprehensions about God and ourselves, our duty and end, our misery and blessedness, the Scripture, where it is communicated by the providence of God, comes in as a light into a dark place, discovering all things clearly and steadily that concern either God or ourselves, our present or future condition, causing all the ghosts and false images of things which men had framed and fancied unto themselves in the dark to vanish and disappear. *Digitus Dei!*—this is none other but the power of God. But principally it evinceth this its divine efficacy by that *spiritual saving light* which it conveys into and implants on the minds of believers. Hence there is none of them who have gained any experience by the observation of God's dealings with them but shall, although they know not the ways and methods of the Spirit's operations by the word, yea, *can* say, with the man unto whom the Lord Jesus restored his sight, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." This power of the word, as the instrument of the Spirit of God for the communication of saving light and knowledge unto the minds of men, the apostle declares 2 Cor. iii. 18, iv. 4, 6. By the efficacy of this power doth he evidence the Scripture to be the word of God. Those who believe find by it a glorious, supernatural light introduced into their minds, whereby they who before saw nothing in a distinct, affecting manner in spirituals, do now clearly discern the truth, the glory, the beauty, and excellency of heavenly mysteries, and have their minds transformed into their image and likeness. And there is no person who hath the witness in himself of the kindling of this heavenly light in his mind by the word but hath also the evidence in himself of its divine original.

(3.) It doth, in like manner, evidence its divine authority by the *awe* which it puts on the minds of the *generality of mankind* unto whom it is made known, so that they dare not absolutely reject it. Multitudes there are unto whom the word is declared who *hate* all its precepts, *despise* all its promises, *abhor* all its threatenings, like nothing, approve of nothing, of what it declares or proposes; and yet dare not absolutely refuse or reject it. They deal with it as they do with God himself, whom they hate also, according to the revelation which he hath made of himself in his word. They wish he were not, sometimes they hope he is not, would be glad to be free of his rule; but yet dare not, cannot absolutely deny and disown him, because of that testimony for himself which he keeps alive in them whether they will or no. The same is the frame of their hearts and minds towards the Scripture, and that for no other

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reason but because it is the word of God, and manifesteth itself so to be. They hate it, wish it were not, hope it is not true; but are not by any means able to shake off a disquiet in the sense of its divine authority. This testimony it hath fixed in the hearts of multitudes of its enemies, Ps. xlv. 5.

(4.) It evidences its divine power in *administering strong consolations* in the deepest and most unrelievable distresses. Some such there are, and such many men fall into, wherein all means and hopes of relief may be utterly removed and taken away. So is it when the miseries of men are not known unto any that will so much as pity them or wish them relief; or if they have been known, and there hath been an eye to pity them, yet there hath been no hand to help them. Such hath been the condition of innumerable souls, as on other accounts, so in particular under the power of persecutors, when they have been shut up in filthy and nasty dungeons, not to be brought out but unto death, by the most exquisite tortures that the malice of hell could invent or the bloody cruelty of man inflict. Yet in these and the like distresses doth the word of God, by its divine power and efficacy, break through all interposing difficulties, all dark and discouraging circumstances, supporting, refreshing, and comforting such poor distressed sufferers, yea, commonly filling them under overwhelming calamities with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Though *they* are in bonds, yet is the word of God not bound; neither can all the power of hell, nor all the diligence or fury of men, keep out the word from entering into prisons, dungeons, flames, to administer strong consolations against all fears, pains, wants, dangers, deaths, or whatever we may in this mortal life be exposed unto. And sundry other instances of the like nature might be pleaded, wherein the word gives evident demonstration unto the minds and consciences of men of its own divine power and authority: which is the second way whereby the Holy Ghost, its author, gives testimony unto its original.

But it is not merely the grounds and reasons whereon we believe the Scripture to be the word of God which we designed to declare; the whole work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to believe them so to be was proposed unto consideration. And beyond what we have insisted on, there is yet a farther peculiar work of his, whereby he effectually ascertains our minds of the Scriptures being the word of God, whereby we are ultimately established in the faith thereof. And I cannot but both admire and bewail that this should be denied by any that would be esteemed Christians. Wherefore, if there be any necessity thereof, I shall take occasion in the *second part* of this discourse farther to confirm this part of the truth, thus far debated,—namely, *that God by his Holy Spirit doth secretly and*

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effectually persuade and satisfy the minds and souls of believers in the divine truth and authority of the Scriptures, whereby he infallibly secures their faith against all objections and temptations whatsoever; so that they can safely and comfortably dispose of their souls in all their concernments, with respect unto this life and eternity, according unto the undeceivable truth and guidance of it. But I shall no farther insist on these things at present.

CHAPTER VII.

Inferences from the whole—Some objections answered.

THREE things do offer themselves unto consideration from what hath been discoursed:—

1. What is the ground and reason why the meanest and most unlearned sort of believers do assent unto this truth, *that the Scriptures are the word of God*, with no less firmness, certainty, and *assurance* of mind, than do the wisest and most learned of them; yea, ofttimes the faith of the former sort herein is of the best growth and firmest consistency against oppositions and temptations. Now, no *assent of the mind* can be accompanied with any more assurance than *the evidence* whose effect it is, and which it is resolved into, will afford; nor doth any evidence of truth beget an assent unto it in the mind but as it is apprehended and understood. Wherefore, the evidence of this truth, wherein soever it consists, must be that which is perceived, apprehended, and understood, by the meanest and most unlearned sort of true believers; for, as was said, they do no less firmly assent and adhere unto it than the wisest and most learned of them. It cannot, therefore, consist in such subtile and learned arguments, whose sense they cannot understand or comprehend. But the things we have pleaded are of another nature: for those *characters* of divine wisdom, goodness, holiness, grace, and sovereign authority, which are implanted in the Scripture by the Holy Ghost, are as legible unto the faith of the meanest as of the most learned believer; and they also are no less capable of an experimental *understanding* of the divine power and efficacy of the Scripture, in all its spiritual operations, than those who are more wise and skilful in discerning the force of *external arguments* and motives of credibility. It must, therefore, of necessity be granted, that the formal reason of faith consists in those things whereof the evidence is equally obvious unto all sorts of believers.

2. Whence it is that the assent of faith, whereby we believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, is usually affirmed to be accom-

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panied with more *assurance* than any assent which is the effect of science upon the most demonstrative principles. They who affirm this do not consider faith as it is in this or that individual person, or in all that do sincerely believe, but in its own nature and essence, and what it is meet and able to produce. And the schoolmen do distinguish between a *certainty* or *assurance of evidence* and an *assurance of adherence*. In the latter, they say, the certainty of *faith* doth exceed that of science; but it is less in respect of the former. But it is not easily to be conceived how the certainty of adherence should exceed the certainty of evidence, with respect unto any object whatsoever. That which seems to render a difference in this case is, that the evidence which we have in things scientifical is speculative, and affects the mind only; but the evidence which we have by faith effectually worketh on the will also, because of the goodness and excellency of the things that are believed. And hence it is that the whole soul doth more firmly adhere unto the objects of faith upon that evidence which it hath of them, than unto other things whereof it hath clearer evidence, wherein the will and affections are little or not at all concerned. And Bonaventure giveth a reason of no small weight why faith is more certain than science, not with the certainty of speculation, but of adherence: "Quoniam fideles Christiani, nec argumentis, nec tormentis, nec blandimentis adduci possunt, vel inclinari, ut veritatem quam credunt vel ore tenus negent; quod nemo peritus alicujus scientiæ faceret, si acerrimis tormentis cogeretur scientiam suam de conclusione aliqua geometrica vel arithmetica retractare. Stultus enim et ridiculus esset geometra, qui pro sua scientia in controversiis geometricis mortem auderet subire, nisi in quantum dictat fides, non esse mentiendum." And whatever may be said of this distinction, I think it cannot modestly be denied that there is a greater assurance in faith than is in any scientifical conclusions, until as many good and wise men will part with all their worldly concernments and their lives, by the most exquisite tortures, in the confirmation of any truth which they have received, merely on the ground of reason acting in human sciences, as have so done on the certainty which they had by faith that the Scripture is a divine revelation: for in bearing testimony hereunto have innumerable multitudes of the best, the holiest, and the wisest men that ever were in the world, cheerfully and joyfully sacrificed all their temporal and adventured all their eternal concernments; for they did it under a full satisfaction that in parting with all temporary things, they should be eternally blessed or eternally miserable, according as their persuasion in faith proved true or false. Wherefore, unto the firmitude and constancy which we have in the assurance of faith, three things do concur:—

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(1.) That this *ability of assent upon testimony* is the highest and most noble power or faculty of our rational souls; and, therefore, where it hath the highest evidence whereof it is capable,—which it hath in the testimony of God,—it giveth us the highest certainty or assurance whereof in this world we are capable.

(2.) Unto the assent of divine faith there is required an *especial internal operation of the Holy Ghost.* This rendereth it of another nature than any mere natural act and operation of our minds; and, therefore, if the assurance of it may not properly be said to exceed the assurance of science in degree, it is only because it is of a more excellent kind, and so is not capable of comparison unto it as to degrees.

(3.) That the revelation which God makes of himself, his mind and will, by his word, is more *excellent,* and accompanied with greater evidence of his *infinitely glorious properties,*—wherein alone the mind can find absolute rest and satisfaction (which is its assurance),—than any other discovery of truth, of what sort soever, is capable of; neither is the assurance of the mind *absolutely perfect* in any thing beneath the enjoyment of God. Wherefore, the soul by faith making the nearest approaches whereof in this life it is capable unto the eternal spring of being, truth, and goodness, it hath the highest rest, satisfaction, and assurance therein, that in this life it can attain unto.

3. It followeth from hence that those that would deny either of these two things, or would so separate between them as to exclude the *necessity* of either unto the duty of believing,—namely, the *internal work* of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, enabling them to believe, and the *external work* of the same Holy Spirit, giving evidence in and by the Scripture unto its own divine original,—do endeavour to expel all true divine faith out of the world, and to substitute a probable persuasion in the room thereof.

For a close unto this discourse, which hath now been drawn forth unto a greater length than was at first intended, I shall consider some objections that are usually pleaded in opposition unto the truth asserted and vindicated:—

1. It is, therefore, objected, in the first place, "That the plea hitherto insisted on cannot be managed without great disadvantage to Christian religion; for if we take away the *rational grounds* on which we believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine, and the whole evidence of the truth of it be laid on things not only derided by men of *atheistical spirits,* but in themselves such as cannot be discerned by any but such as do believe, on what *grounds* can we proceed to convince an unbeliever?"

Ans. 1. By the way, it is one thing to prove and believe the doctrine of Christ to be true and divine; another, to prove and believe

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the Scripture to be given by inspiration of God, or the divine authority of the Scripture, which alone was proposed unto consideration. A doctrine true and divine may be written in and proposed unto us by writings that were not *divinely and infallibly inspired;* and so might the doctrine of Christ have been, but not without the unspeakable disadvantage of the church. And there are sundry arguments which forcibly and effectually prove the doctrine of Christ to have been *true and divine*, which are not of any efficacy to prove the divine authority of the Scriptures; though, on the other hand, whatever doth prove the divine authority of the Scriptures doth equally prove the divine truth of the doctrine of Christ.

2. There are two ways of *convincing unbelievers*,—the one insisted on by the *apostles* and their *followers*, the other by some *learned men* since their days. The way principally insisted on by the apostles was, by *preaching* the word itself unto them in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; by the power whereof, manifesting the authority of God in it, they were convinced, and falling down acknowledged God to be in it of a truth, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, xiv. 24, 25. It is likely that in this their proposal of the gospel, the doctrine and truths contained in it, unto unbelievers, those of *atheistical spirits* would both deride them and it; and so, indeed, it came to pass, many esteeming *themselves* to be *babblers* and their doctrine to be *arrant folly*. But yet they desisted not from pursuing their work in the same way; whereunto God gave success. The other way is, to prove unto *unbelievers* that the *Scripture is true and divine* by rational arguments; wherein some learned persons have laboured, especially in these last ages, to very good purpose. And certainly their labours are greatly to be commended, whilst they attend unto these rules:—(1.) That they produce no arguments but such as are *cogent*, and not liable unto just exceptions; for if, to manifest their own skill or learning, they plead such reasons as are capable of an answer and solution, they exceedingly prejudice the truth, by subjecting it unto dubious *disputations*, whereas in itself it is clear, firm, and sacred. (2.) That they do not pretend their rational grounds and arguments to be the sole foundation that faith hath to rest upon, or which it is resolved into; for this were the ready way to set up an opinion, instead of faith supernatural and divine. Accept but of these two limitations, and it is acknowledged that the rational grounds and arguments intended may be rationally pleaded, and ought so to be, unto the conviction of gainsayers; for no man doth so plead the *self-evidencing power* of the Scripture as to deny that the use of other external motives and arguments is necessary to stop the mouths of *atheists*, as also unto the farther establishment of them who do believe. These things are subordinate, and no way inconsistent.

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The truth is, if we will attend unto our own and the experience of the whole church of God, the way whereby we come to believe the Scripture to be the *word of God* ordinarily is this, and no other. God having first given his *word* as the foundation of our faith and obedience, hath appointed the *ministry of men*, at first extraordinary, afterward ordinary, to propose unto us the doctrines, truths, precepts, promises, and threatenings contained therein. Together with this proposition of them, they are appointed to declare that these things are not from *themselves*, nor of their own *invention*, 2 Tim. iii. 14–17. And this is done variously. Unto some the word of God in this *ministry* thus comes, or is thus proposed, preached, or declared, whilst they are in a condition not only utterly unacquainted with the mysteries of it, but filled with contrary apprehensions, and consequently prejudiced against it. Thus it came of old unto the *pagan world*, and must do so unto such persons and nations as are yet in the same state with them. Unto these the first preachers of the gospel did not produce the *book of the Scriptures*, and tell them that it was the word of God, and that it would evidence itself unto them so to be, for this had been to despise the wisdom and authority of God in their own ministry; but they preached the doctrines of it unto them, grounding themselves on the divine revelation contained therein. And this proposition of the truth or preaching of the gospel was not *left of God* to work itself into the reason of men by the suitableness of it thereunto; but being his *own institution* for their illumination and conversion, he accompanied it with divine power, and made it effectual unto the ends designed, Rom. i. 16. And the event hereof among mankind was, that by *some* this *new doctrine* was derided and scorned; by *others*, whose *hearts God opened to attend unto it*, it was embraced and submitted unto. Among those who, after the propagation of the gospel, are born, as they say, *within the pale of the church*, the same doctrine is variously instilled into persons, according unto the several duties and concerns of others to instruct them. Principally, the *ministry of the word* is ordained of God unto that end, whereon the church is the pillar and ground of truth. Those of both sorts unto whom the doctrine mentioned is preached or proposed are directed unto the Scriptures as the sacred repository thereof; for they are told that these things come by *revelation* from God, and that that revelation is contained in the *Bible*, which is his word. Upon this proposal, with inquiry into it and consideration of it, God co-operating by his Spirit, there is such evidence of its divine original communicated unto their minds through its power and efficacy, with the characters of divine wisdom and holiness implanted on it, which they are now enabled to discern, that they believe it and rest in it as the immediate word of God. Thus was it in the

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case of the woman of Samaria and the inhabitants of Sychar with respect unto their faith in Christ Jesus, John iv. 42. This is the way whereby men ordinarily are brought to believe the word of God, Rom. x. 14, 15, 17; and that neither by external arguments nor motives, which no one soul was ever converted unto God by, nor by any mere naked proposal and offer of the book unto them, nor by miracles, nor by immediate revelation or private subjective testimony of the Spirit; nor is their faith a persuasion of mind that they can give no reason of, but only that they are so persuaded.

2. But it will be yet farther objected, "That if there be such clear evidence in the thing itself, that is, in the divine original and authority of the Scriptures, that none who freely use their reason can deny it, then it lies either in the naked proposal of the thing unto the understanding,—and if so, then every one that assents unto this proposition, '*That the whole is greater than the part,*' must likewise assent unto this, 'That the Scripture is the word of God,'—or the evidence must not lie in the naked proposal, but in the efficacy of the Spirit of God in the minds of them unto whom it is proposed."

Ans. 1. I know no divine, ancient or modern, popish or protestant, who doth not assert that there is a work of the Holy Ghost on the minds of men necessary unto a due belief of the Scripture to be the word of God; and the consideration hereof ought not by any Christian to be excluded. But they say not that this is the objective testimony or evidence on which we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, concerning which alone is our inquiry.

2. We do not dispute how far or by what means this proposition, "*The Scripture is the word of God,*" may be evidenced merely unto our reason, but unto our understanding as capable of giving an assent upon testimony. It is not said that this is a first principle of reason, though it be of faith, nor that it is capable of a *mathematical demonstration.* That the whole is greater than the part is self-evident unto our reason upon its first proposal, but such none pretends to be in the Scripture, because it is a subject not capable of it; nor do those who deny the self-evidence of the Scripture pretend by their arguments for its divine authority to give such an evidence of it unto reason as is in first principles or *mathematical demonstrations,* but content themselves with that which they call a "moral certainty." But it is by faith we are obliged to receive the truth of this proposition, which respects the power of our minds to assent unto truth upon testimony, infallibly on that which is infallible. And hereunto it evidenceth its own truth, not with the same, but with an evidence and certainty of a higher nature and nobler kind than that of the *strictest demonstration* in things natural or the most forcible argument in things moral.

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3. It will be objected, "That if this be so, then none can be *obliged to receive the Scripture* as the word of God who hath not faith, and none have faith but those in whom it is wrought by the Spirit of God, and thereinto all will be resolved at last."

Ans. 1. Indeed there is no room for this objection, for the whole work of the Spirit is pleaded only as he is the *efficient cause of believing*, and not the *objective*, or reason why we do believe. But,—

2. We must not be ashamed to resolve all we do well spiritually, and in obedience to the command of God, into the efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost in us, unless we intend to be ashamed of the gospel. But this still makes his *internal operation* to be the *efficient*, and not his *internal testimony* to be the *formal*, reason of our faith.

3. It is another question, whether all obligation unto duty is and must be proportionate unto our own strength without divine assistance; which we deny, and affirm that we are obliged unto many things by virtue of God's *command* which we have no power to answer but by virtue of his *grace*.

4. Where the proposal of the Scripture is made in the way before described, those unto whom it is proposed are obliged to receive it as the word of God, upon the evidence which it gives of itself so to be; yea, every real, true, divine revelation made unto men, or every proposal of the Scripture by divine providence, hath that evidence of its being from God accompanying it as is sufficient to *oblige them* unto whom it was made to believe it, on pain of his displeasure. If this were otherwise, then either were God obliged to confirm every particular divine revelation with a miracle (which, as to its obligation unto believing, wants not its difficulty), which he did not, as in many of the prophets, nor doth at this day at the first proposal of the gospel to the heathen; or else, when he requires faith and obedience in such ways as in his wisdom he judgeth meet,—that is, in the ordinary ministry of the word,—they are not obliged thereby, nor is it their sin to refuse a compliance with his will.

5. If this difficulty can be no otherwise avoided but by affirming that the faith which God requires of us with respect unto his word is nothing but a *natural assent* unto it upon rational arguments and considerations, which we have an ability for, without any spiritual aid of the Holy Ghost, or respect unto his testimony, as before described,—which overthrows all faith, especially that which is divine, —I shall rather ten thousand times allow of all the just consequences that can follow on the supposition mentioned than admit of this relief. But of those consequences this is none, that any unto whom the Scripture is proposed are exempted from an obligation unto believing.

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In like manner, there is no difficulty in the usual objection which respects particular books of the Scripture, why we receive them as *canonical* and reject others; as, namely, the *Book of Proverbs, and not of Wisdom*, of *Ecclesiastes, and not Ecclesiasticus:* for,—

1. As to the books of the Old Testament, we have the canon of them given us in the New, where it is affirmed that unto the *church of the Jews were committed the oracles of God;* which both confirms all that we receive and excludes all that we exclude. And unto the New there are no pretenders, nor ever were, to the least exercise of the faith of any.

2. All books whatever that have either themselves pretended unto a divine original, or have been pleaded by others to be of that extract, have been, and may be from themselves, without farther help, evicted of falsehood in that pretence. They have all of them hitherto, in matter or manner, in plain confessions or other sufficient evidence, manifested themselves to be of a human original. And much danger is not to be feared from any that for the future shall be set forth with the same pretence.

3. We are not bound to refuse the *ministry of the church*, or the advantages of providence whereby the Scripture is brought unto us, with the testimonies which, either directly or collaterally, any one part of it gives unto another. Although the Scripture be to be believed *for itself*, yet it is not ordinarily to be believed *by itself*, without the help of other means.

4. On these suppositions I fear not to affirm that there are on every *individual book of the Scripture*, particularly those named, those divine characters and *criteria* which are sufficient to difference them from all other writings whatever, and to testify their divine authority unto the minds and consciences of believers. I say of *believers*, for we inquire not on what ground unbelievers, or those who do not believe, do believe the word of God, nor yet directly on what outward motives such persons may be induced so to do; but our sole inquiry at present is, what the faith of them *who do believe* is resolved into. It is not, therefore, said that when our Lord Jesus Christ (for we acknowledge that there is the same reason of the first giving out of divine revelations as is of the Scripture) came and preached unto the Jews, that these mere words, "I am the light of the world," or the like, had all this evidence in them or with them; for nothing he said of that kind may be separated from its circumstances. But supposing the testimonies given in the Scripture beforehand to his person, work, time, and manner of coming, with the evidence of the presence of God with him in the declaration that he made of his doctrine and himself to be the Messiah, the Jews were bound to believe what he taught, and himself to be the Son of God,

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the Saviour of the world; and so did many of them upon his preaching only, John iv. 42, [viii. 30.] And in like manner they were bound to believe the doctrine of John Baptist, and to submit unto his institutions, although he wrought no miracle; and those who did not rejected the counsel of God for their good, and perished in their unbelief. But although our Lord Jesus Christ wrought no miracles to prove the Scripture then extant to be the word of God, seeing he wrought them among such only as by whom that was firmly believed, yet the wisdom of God saw it necessary to confirm his personal ministry by them. And without a sense of the power and efficacy of the divine truth of the doctrine proposed, *miracles themselves* will be despised; so they were by some who were afterward converted by the preaching of the word, Acts ii. 13: or they will produce only a false faith, or a ravished assent upon an amazement, that will not abide, Acts iii. 7, 8, viii. 13, 21.

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APPENDIX.

A SUMMARY representation of the *nature* and *reason* of that faith wherewith we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, with some *attestations* given unto the substance of what hath been delivered concerning it, shall give a close to this discourse. As to the first part of this design, the things that follow are proposed:—

I. Unto the inquiry, on what grounds, or for what reason, we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, many things are *supposed*, as on all hands agreed upon, whose demonstration or proof belongs not unto our present work. Such are,—

1. The being of God and his self-subsistence, with all the essential properties of his nature.

2. Our relation unto him and dependence on him, as our creator, benefactor, preserver, judge, and rewarder, both as unto things temporal and eternal. Wherefore,—

3. The τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, "whatever may be known of God" by the light of nature, whatever is manifest in or from the works of creation and providence, and necessary actings of conscience, as to the being, rule, and authority of God, are supposed as acknowledged in this inquiry.

4. That beyond the conduct and guidance of the light of nature, that men may live unto God, believe and put their trust in him, according to their duty, in that obedience which he requireth of them, so as to come unto the enjoyment of him, a supernatural revelation of his mind and will unto them, especially in that condition wherein all mankind are since the entrance of sin, is necessary.

5. That all those unto whom God hath granted divine revelations immediately from himself, for their own use, and that of all other men unto whom they were to be communicated, were infallibly assured that they came from God, and that their minds were no way imposed on in them.

6. That all these divine revelations, so far as they are any way necessary to guide and instruct men in the true knowledge of God and that obedience which is acceptable unto him, are now contained in the Scriptures, or those books of the Old and New Testament which are commonly received and owned among all sorts of Christians.

These things, I say, are supposed unto our present inquiry, and taken for granted; so that the reader is not to look for any direct proof of them in the preceding discourse. But on these suppositions it is alleged and proved,—

1. That all men unto whom it is duly proposed as such are bound to believe this Scripture, these books of the Old and New Testament, to be the word of God, —that is, to contain and exhibit an immediate, divine, supernatural revelation of his mind and will, so far as is any way needful that they may live unto him,—and that nothing is contained in them but what is of the same divine original.

2. The obligation of this duty of thus believing the Scripture to be the word of

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God ariseth partly from the nature of the thing itself, and partly from the especial command of God; for it being that revelation of the will of God without the knowledge whereof and assent whereunto we cannot live unto God as we ought, nor come unto the enjoyment of him, it is necessary that we should believe it unto these ends, and God requireth it of us that so we should do.

3. We cannot thus believe it in a way of duty, but upon a sufficient evidence and prevalent testimony that so it is.

4. There are many cogent arguments, testimonies, and motives, to persuade, convince, and satisfy unprejudiced persons, that the Scripture is the word of God or a divine revelation, and every way sufficient to stop the mouths of gainsayers, proceeding on such principles of reason as are owned and approved by the generality of mankind. And arguments of this nature may be taken from almost all considerations, of the properties of God and his government of the world, of our relation unto him, of what belongs unto our present peace and future happiness.

5. From the arguments and testimonies of this nature, a firm persuasion of mind, defensible against all objections, that the Scripture is the word of God, may be attained, and *that* such, as that those who live not in contradiction unto their own light and reason, through the power of their lusts, cannot but judge it their wisdom, duty, and interest to yield obedience unto his will as revealed therein.

6. But yet that persuasion of mind which may be thus attained, and which resteth wholly upon these arguments and testimonies, is not entirely that faith wherewith we are obliged to believe the Scripture to be the word of God in a way of duty; for it is not to be merely human, how firm soever the persuasion in it may be, but divine and supernatural,—of the same kind with that whereby we believe the things themselves contained in the Scripture.

7. We cannot thus believe the Scripture to be the word of God, nor any divine truth therein contained, without the effectual illumination of our minds by the Holy Ghost; and to exclude the consideration of his work herein is to cast the whole inquiry out of the limits of Christian religion.

8. Yet is not this work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds, whereby we are enabled to believe in a way of duty with faith supernatural and divine, the ground and reason *why* we do believe, or the evidence *whereon* we do so, nor is our faith resolved hereinto.

9. Whereas, also, there are sundry other acts of the Holy Spirit in and upon our minds, establishing this faith against temptations unto the contrary, and farther ascertaining us of the divine original of the Scripture, or testifying it unto us, yet are they none of them severally, nor all of them jointly, the formal reason of our faith, nor the ground which we believe upon. Yet are they such as that without the first work of divine illumination, we cannot believe at all in a due manner; so without his other consequent operations, we cannot believe steadfastly against temptations and oppositions. Wherefore,—

10. Those only can believe the Scripture aright to be the word of God, in a way of duty, whose minds are enlightened, and who are enabled to believe by the Holy Ghost.

11. Those who believe not are of two sorts; for they are either such as oppose and gainsay the word as a cunningly-devised fable, or such as are willing without prejudice to attend unto the consideration of it. The former sort may be resisted, opposed, and rebuked by external arguments, and such moral considerations as vehemently persuade the divine original of the Scripture; and from the same principles may their mouths be stopped as to their cavils and exceptions against it;—the other sort are to be led on unto believing by the ministry of the church in the dispensation of the word itself; which is the ordinance of God unto that purpose. But,—

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12. Neither sort doth ever come truly to believe, either merely induced thereunto by force of moral arguments only, or upon the authority of that church by whose *ministry* the Scripture is proposed unto them to be believed. Wherefore,—

13. The formal reason of faith *divine and supernatural*, whereby we believe the Scripture to be the word of God in the way of duty, and as it is required of us, is the authority and veracity of God alone, evidencing themselves unto our minds and consciences in and by the Scripture itself. And herein consisteth that divine testimony of the Holy Ghost, which, as it is a testimony, gives our assent unto the Scriptures the general nature of faith, and as it is a divine testimony gives it the especial nature of faith divine and supernatural.

14. This divine testimony given unto the divine original of the Scripture in and by itself, whereinto our faith is ultimately resolved, is evidenced and made known, as by the characters of the infinite perfections of the divine nature that are in it and upon it, so by the authority, power, and efficacy, over and upon the souls and consciences of men, and the satisfactory excellency of the truths contained therein, wherewith it is accompanied.

15. Wherefore, although there be many cogent external arguments whereby a moral, steadfast persuasion of the divine authority of the Scriptures may be attained; and although it be the principal duty of the true church in all ages to give testimony thereunto, which it hath done successively at all times since first it was intrusted with it; and although there be many other means whereby we are induced, persuaded, and enabled to believe it; yet is it for its own sake only, efficaciously manifesting itself to be the word of God, or upon the divine testimony that is given in it and by it thereunto, that we believe it to be so with faith divine and supernatural.

Corol. Those who either deny the necessity of an internal subjective work of the Holy Ghost enabling us to believe, or the objective testimony of the Holy Spirit given unto the Scripture in and by itself, or do deny their joint concurrence in and unto our believing, do deny all faith properly divine and supernatural.

II. This being the substance of what is declared and pleaded for in the preceding treatise, to prevent the obloquy of some and confirm the judgment of others, I shall add the suffrage of ancient and modern writers given unto the principal parts of it, and whereon all other things asserted in it do depend:—

Clemens Alexandrinus discourseth at large unto this purpose, Strom. vii. cap. 16, "Ἔχομεν γὰρ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς διδασκαλίας τὸν Κύριον, διά τε τῶν προφητῶν, διά τε τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, καὶ διὰ τῶν μακαρίων ἀποστόλων, πολυτρόπως καὶ πολυμερῶς ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰς τέλος ἡγούμενον τῆς γνώσεως·—"We have the Lord himself for the principle or beginning of doctrine; who, by the prophets, the gospel, and blessed apostles, in various manners and by divers degrees, goeth before us, or leads us unto knowledge." [This is that which we lay down as the reason and ground of faith,—namely, the authority of the Lord himself instructing us by the Scriptures.] So he adds: Τὴν ἀρχὴν δ' εἴτις ἑτέρου δεῖσθαι ὑπολάβοι, οὐκέτ' ἂν ὄντως ἀρχὴ φυλαχθείη. Ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ πιστὸς, τῇ κυριακῇ γραφῇ τε καὶ φωνῇ ἀξιόπιστος εἰκότως ἂν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου πρὸς τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων εὐεργεσίαν ἐνεργουμένη· ἀμέλει πρὸς τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων εὕρεσιν, αὐτῇ χρώμεθα κριτηρίῳ· τὸ κρινόμενον δὲ πᾶν, ἔτι ἄπιστον πρὶν κριθῆναι· ὥστ' οὐδ' ἀρχὴ τὸ κρίσεως δεόμενον·—"And if any one suppose that he needeth any other principle, the principle will not be kept;" [that is, if we need any other principle whereinto to resolve our faith, the word of God is no more a principle unto us.] "But he who is faithful from himself is worthy to be believed in his sovereign writing and voice; which, as it appeareth, is administered by the Lord for the benefit of men. And certainly we use it as a rule of judging for the invention of things. But whatever is judged is not credible, or to be believed, until it is judged; and that is no principle which stands in need to be judged." The intention of his words is, that God, who

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alone is to be believed for himself, hath given us his word as the rule whereby we are to judge of all things. And this word is so to be believed as not to be subject unto any other judgment; because if it be so, it cannot be either a principle or a rule. And so he proceeds: Εἰκότως τοίνυν πίστει περιλαβόντες ἀναπόδεικτον τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐκ περιουσίας, καὶ τὰς ἀποδείξεις παρ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἀρχῆς περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς λαβόντες, φωνῇ Κυρίου παιδευόμεθα πρὸς τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας·—"Wherefore, it is meet that, embracing by faith the most sufficient, indemonstrable principle, and taking the demonstrations of the principle from the principle itself, we are instructed by the voice of the Lord himself unto the acknowledgment of the truth." In few words he declares the substance of what we have pleaded for. No more do we maintain in this cause but what Clemens doth here assert,—namely, that we believe the Scripture for itself, as that which needeth no antecedent or external demonstration, but all the evidence and demonstration of its divine original is to be taken from itself alone; which yet he farther confirms: Οὐ γὰρ ἁπλῶς ἀποφαινομένοις ἀνθρώποις προσέχοιμεν, οἷς καὶ ἀνταποφαίνεσθαι ἐπ' ἴσης ἔξεστιν. Εἰ δ' οὐκ ἀρκεῖ μόνον ἁπλῶς εἰπεῖν τὸ δόξαν, ἀλλὰ πιστώσασθαι δεῖ τὸ λεχθὲν, οὐ τὴν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀναμένομεν μαρτυρίαν, ἀλλὰ τῇ τοῦ Κυρίου φωνῇ πιστούμεθα τὸ ζητούμενον. Ἡ πασῶν ἀποδείξεων ἐχεγγυωτέρα, μᾶλλον δ', ἡ μόνη ἀπόδειξις οὖσα τυγχάνει. Οὕτως οὖν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀπ' αὐτῶν περὶ αὐτῶν τῶν γραφῶν τελείως ἀποδεικνύντες, ἐκ πίστεως πειθόμεθα ἀποδεικτικῶς·—"For we would not attend or give credit simply to the definitions of men, seeing we have right also to define in contradiction unto them. And seeing it is not sufficient merely to say or assert what appears to be truth, but to beget a belief also of what is spoken, we expect not the testimony of men, but confirm that which is inquired about with the voice of the Lord; which is more full and firm than any demonstration, yea, which rather is the only demonstration. Thus we, taking our demonstrations of the Scripture out of the Scripture, are assured by faith as by demonstration." And in other places, as Strom. iv., he plainly affirms that the way of Christians was to prove the Scripture by itself, and all other things by the Scripture.

Basilius speaks to the same purpose on Ps. cxv.: Πίστις, ἡ ὑπὲρ τὰς λογικὰς μεθόδους τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς συγκατάθεσιν ἕλκουσα. Πίστις, οὐχ ἡ γεωμετρικαῖς ἀνάγκαις, ἀλλ' ἡ ταῖς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐνεργείαις ἐγγινομένη·—"Faith, which draws the soul to assent above all methods of reasonings; faith, which is not the effect of geometrical demonstrations, but of the efficacy of the Spirit." The nature, cause, and efficacy of that faith whereby we believe the Scripture to be the word of God, are asserted by him.

Nemesius, De Homin., cap. ii.: Ἡ τῶν θείων λογίων διδασκαλία, τὸ πιστὸν ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἔχουσα διὰ τὸ θεόπνευστον εἶναι·—"The doctrine of the divine oracles hath its credibility from itself, because of its divine inspiration."

The words of Austin, though taken notice of by all, yet may here be again reported. Confess., lib. xi. cap. 3: "Audiam et intelligam quomodo fecisti cœlum et terram. Scripsit hoc Moses; scripsit et abiit, transivit hinc ad te. Neque nunc ante me est; nam si esset, tenerem eum, et rogarem eum, et per te obsecrarem, ut mihi ista panderet; et præberem aures corporis mei sonis erumpentibus ex ore ejus. At si Hebræa voce loqueretur, frustra pulsaret sensum meum, nec inde mentem meam quidquam tangeret; si autem Latine, scirem quid diceret. Sed unde scirem an verum diceret? quod si et hoc scirem, num et ab illo scirem? Intus utique mihi, intus in domicilio cogitationis, nec Hebræa, nec Græca, nec Latina, nec barbara, veritas, sine oris et linguæ organis, sine strepitu syllabarum diceret, 'Verum dicit;' at ego statim certus confidenter illi homini tuo dicerem, 'Verum dicis.' Cum ergo illum interrogare non possim, te, quo plenus vera dixit, veritas, te Deus meus rogo, parce peccatis meis; et qui illi servo tuo dedisti hæc dicere, da et mihi hæc intelligere;"—"I would hear, I would understand how thou madest the heaven and the earth. Moses wrote this; he wrote it, and is gone

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hence to thee, for he is not now before me; for if he were, I would hold him, and ask him, and beseech him, for thy sake, that he would open these things unto me; and I would apply the ears of my body to the sounds breaking forth from his mouth. But if he should use the Hebrew language, in vain should he affect my sense, for he would not at all touch my mind. If he should speak Latin, I should know what he said. But whence should I know that he spake the truth? and if I should know this also, should I know it of him? Within me, in the habitation of my own thoughts, truth, neither in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, nor any barbarous language, without the organs of mouth or tongue, without the noise of syllables, would say, 'He speaks the truth;' and I, being immediately assured or certain of it, would say unto that servant of thine, 'Thou speakest truth.' Whereas, therefore, I cannot ask him, I ask thee, O Truth, with which he being filled spake the things that are true, O my God, I ask of thee, pardon my sins; and thou who gavest unto this thy servant to speak these things, give unto me to understand them."

That which is most remarkable in these words is, that he plainly affirms that faith would not ensue on the declaration of the prophets themselves if they were present with us, unless there be an internal work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds to enable us, and persuade them thereunto. And, indeed, he seems to place all assurance of the truth of divine revelations in the inward assurance which God gives us of them by his Spirit; which we have before considered.

The second Arausican council gives full testimony unto the necessity of the internal grace of the Spirit that we may believe: Can. vii., "Siquis evangelicæ prædicationi consentire posse confirmat absque illuminatione et inspiratione Spiritus Sancti, hæretico fallitur spiritu."

To descend unto later times, wherein these things have been much disputed, yet the truth hath beamed such light into the eyes of many as to enforce an acknowledgment from them when they have examined themselves about it. The words of Baptista Mantuanus are remarkable, De Patient., lib. iii. cap. 2: "Sæpe mecum cogitavi unde tam suadibilis sit ipsa Scriptura, unde tam potenter influat in animos auditorum, unde tantum habeat energiæ, ut non ad opinandum tantum, sed ad solide credendum omnes inflectat? Non est hoc imputandum rationum evidentiæ, quas non adducit; non artis industriæ aut verbis suavibus ad persuadendum accommodatis, quibus non utitur. Sed vide an id in causa sit, quod persuasi sumus eam a prima veritate fluxisse? Sed unde sumus ita persuasi nisi ab ipsa? quasi ad ei credendum nos sui ipsius contrahat authoritas. Sed unde oro hanc authoritatem sibi vendicavit? Neque enim vidimus nos Deum concionantem, scribentem, docentem; tamen, ac si vidissemus, credimus et tenemus a Spiritu Sancto fluxisse quæ legimus. Forsan fuerit hæc ratio firmiter adhærendi, quod in ea veritas sit solidior, quamvis non clarior; habet enim omnis veritas vim inclinativam, et major majorem, et maxima maximam. Sed cur ergo non omnes credunt evangelio? *Respond.* Quod non omnes trahuntur a Deo. Sed longa opus est disputatione? Firmiter sacris Scripturis ideo credimus quod divinam inspirationem intus accepimus;"—"I have often thought with myself whence the Scripture itself is so persuasive, from whence it doth so powerfully influence the minds of its hearers, that it inclines or leads them not only to receive an opinion, but surely to believe. This is not to be imputed to the evidence of reasons, which it doth not produce; nor unto the industry of art, with words smooth and fit to persuade, which it useth not. See, then, if this be not the cause of it, that we are persuaded that it comes from the first Truth or Verity. But whence are we so persuaded, but from itself alone? as if its own authority should effectually draw us to believe it. But whence, I pray, hath it this authority? We saw not God preaching, writing, or teaching of it; but yet, as if we had seen him, we believe and firmly hold that the things which we read proceeded from the Holy Ghost. It

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may be this is the reason why we so firmly adhere unto it, that truth is more solid in it, though not more clear, than in other writings; for all truth hath a persuasive power, the greater truth the greater power, and that which is greatest the greatest efficacy of all. But why, then, do not all believe the gospel? *Ans.* Because all are not drawn of God. But what need is there of any long disputation? We therefore firmly believe the Scriptures, because we have received a divine inspiration assuring us." And in what sense this is allowed hath been declared in the preceding discourse.

I shall close the whole with the testimony of them by whom the truth which we assert is most vehemently opposed, when it riseth in opposition unto an especial interest of their own.

Two things there are which are principally excepted against in the doctrine of Protestants concerning our belief of the Scripture. The first is with respect unto the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause of faith; for whereas they teach that no man can believe the Scripture to be the word of God in a due manner, and according unto his duty, without the real internal aid and operation of the Holy Ghost, however it be proposed unto him, and with what arguments soever the truth of its divine original be confirmed, this is charged on them as an error and a crime. And, secondly, whereas they also affirm that there is an inward testimony or witness of the Holy Spirit, whereby he assures and confirms the minds of men in the faith of the Scriptures with an efficacy exceeding all the persuasive evidence of outward arguments and motives, this also by some they are traduced for. And yet those of the Roman church who are looked on as most averse from that resolution of faith which most Protestants acquiesce in, do expressly maintain both these assertions.

The design of Stapleton, De Principiis Fidei, controver. 4, lib. viii. cap. 1, is to prove, "impossibile esse sine speciali gratia, ac dono fidei divinitùs infuso, actum veræ fidei producere, aut ex veri nominis fide credere,"—which he there proves with sundry arguments,—namely, "that it is impossible to produce any act of faith, or to believe with faith rightly so called, without special grace, and the divine infusion of the gift of faith." And Bellarmine speaks to the same purpose: "Argumenta quæ articulos fidei nostræ credibiles faciunt non talia sunt ut fidem omnino indubitatam reddant, nisi mens divinitùs adjuvetur," De Grat. et Lib. Arbit., lib. vi. cap. 3;—"The arguments which render the articles of our faith credible are not such as produce an undoubted faith, unless the mind be divinely assisted.

Melchior Canus, Loc. Theol., lib. ii. cap. 8, disputes expressly to this purpose: "Id statuendum est, authoritatem humanam et incitamenta omnia illa prædicta, sive alia quæcunque adhibita ab eo qui proponit fidem, non esse sufficientes causas ad credendum ut credere tenemur; sed præterea opus esse interiori causa efficiente, id est, Dei speciali auxilio moventis ad credendum;"—"This is firmly to be held, that human authority and all the motives before mentioned, or any other which may be used by him who proposeth the object of faith to be believed, are not sufficient causes of believing as we are obliged to believe; but there is, moreover, necessary an internal efficient cause moving us to believe, which is the especial help or aid of God." And a little after he speaks yet more plainly, "Externæ igitur omnes et humanæ persuasiones non sunt satis ad credendum, quantumcunque ab hominibus competenter ea quæ sunt fidei proponantur; sed necessaria est insuper causa interior, hoc est, divinum quoddam lumen, incitans ad credendum, et oculi quidam interiores Dei beneficio ad videndum dati;"—"Wherefore, all external human persuasions or arguments are not sufficient causes of faith, however the things of faith may be sufficiently proposed by men; there is, moreover, necessary an internal cause, that is, a certain divine light, inciting to believe, or certain internal

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eyes to see, given us by the grace of God." Yea, all other learned men of the same profession do speak to the same purpose.

The other assertion, also, they do no less comply withal: "Arcanum divini Spiritus testimonium prorsus necessarium est, ut quis ecclesiæ testimonio ac judicio circa Scripturarum approbationem credat," saith Stapleton;—"The secret testimony of the Spirit is altogether necessary, that a man may believe the testimony and judgment of the church about the Scriptures." And the words of Gregory de Valentia are remarkable: "Cum hactenus ejusmodi argumenta pro authoritate Christianæ doctrinæ fecerimus, quæ per seipsa satis prudentibus esse debeant, ut animum inducant velle credere; tamen nescio an non sit argumentum iis omnibus majus, quod qui vere Christiani sunt, ita se animo affectos esse, quod ad fidem attinet, sentiunt, ut præcipue quidem propter nullum argumentum, quod vel hactenus fecimus vel ratione similiter excogitari possit, sed propter aliud nescio quid, quod alio quodam modo et longe fortius quam ulla argumenta persuadet, ut ad firmiter credendum [trahi] se intelligant," tom. iii. in Thom., disp. 7, qu. 1, punc. 4, sect. 2. Let any man compare these words with those of Calvin, Institut. lib. i., cap. 7, sect. 5; which, as I remember, I have cited before, and he will know whence the sense of them was taken. "Whereas," saith he, "we have hitherto pleaded arguments for the authority of Christian doctrine, which even by themselves ought to suffice prudent persons to induce their minds to belief, yet I know not whether there be not an argument greater than they all,—namely, that those who are truly Christians do find or feel by experience their minds so affected in this matter of faith, that they are moved (and obliged) firmly to believe, neither for any argument that we have used, nor for any of the like sort that can be found out by reason, but for somewhat else which persuades our minds in another manner, and far more effectually than any arguments whatever." And to show what he means by this internal argument and persuasion, he affirms elsewhere that "Deus ipse imprimis est, qui, Christianam doctrinam atque adeo Scripturam sacram veram esse, voce revelationis suæ et interno quodam instinctu et impulsu, humanis mentibus contestatur;"—"It is God himself who, by the voice of his revelation, and by a certain internal instinct and impulse, witnesseth unto the minds of men the truth of Christian doctrine or of the holy Scripture."

These few testimonies have I produced amongst the many that might be urged to the same purpose, not to confirm the truth which we have pleaded for, which stands on far surer foundations, but only to obviate prejudices in the minds of some, who, being not much conversant in things of this nature, are ready to charge what hath been delivered unto this purpose with singularity.

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ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ·

OR,

THE CAUSES, WAYS, AND MEANS OF UNDERSTANDING THE MIND OF GOD AS REVEALED IN HIS WORD, WITH ASSURANCE THEREIN;

AND

A DECLARATION OF THE PERSPICUITY OF THE SCRIPTURES, WITH THE EXTERNAL MEANS OF THE INTERPRETATION OF THEM.

Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.—Ps. cxix. 18.
Give me understanding, and I shall live.—Verse 144.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following work is the latter part of our author's treatise on the operations of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the minds of believers, and relates to the method by which we are to understand and interpret Scripture aright, as the former part of it was occupied exclusively with a discussion of the evidence or grounds on which we receive it as divine.

In the preceding treatise, on "The Reason of Faith," Owen, while defending the objective authority of the Word, in opposition to the principle of an "inward light," asserted and proved the necessity of spiritual influence for the due reception of the Word in its divine authority. His argument in the present treatise has "especial respect unto the Church of Rome," and, on the principle that every man has a right to interpret Scripture, opens with a denial of the claim of that church to be the only interpreter of Scripture. The Quaker and the Romanist agree in holding the subordination of Scripture to another authority in matters of faith,—the former finding this authority in his inward light, the latter vesting it in the church. Our author, in common with the general body of Protestants, asserts the sufficiency of revelation in itself as a rule of faith and duty, provided it be read and understood in the enjoyment of the enlightening influence of the Spirit, and in the use of certain divinely appointed means.

This treatise, if not among the best known, is among the most useful, of our author's works. The subject is of confessed importance, and he handles it with all his characteristic sagacity. Singularly coherent and comprehensive in its details, less prolix than most of his works, and free from irrelevant digressions, it is not to this day superseded by any similar treatise on the same subject, and forms an excellent manual for all who are engaged in sacred studies as a profession. Dr Pye Smith, in his "Scripture Testimony to the Messiah," quotes from it copiously, in illustration of the spirit with which the study of the divine Word should be prosecuted, nor has he by any means exhausted the noble and weighty sentiments which occur in this work, expressive of humble reverence for its supreme authority. Owen in himself exemplifies the benefit sure to accrue from the prostration of every claim and gift before the throne of revealed truth. Few have surpassed him in "the full assurance of understanding."

ANALYSIS.

The presumptuous claim of the Romish Church to the infallible interpretation of the Word is denied, and the right of private judgment in the interpretation of it asserted; the question considered is declared to relate to the method by which we attain to a right perception of the mind of God in Scripture, and this method is described as twofold:—I. Through a principal efficient cause; and, II. Auxiliary means, internal and external, appointed of God, chap. I.

I. The Holy Spirit is represented as the EFFICIENT CAUSE, and an inquiry follows:—1. Into the *evidence* of the work of the Spirit in the communication of spiritual understanding;—various testimonies from Scripture are adduced, involving a minute discussion of Ps. cxix. 18, 2 Cor. iii. 13–18, Isa. xxv. 7, Luke xxiv. 44, 45, Eph. i. 17–19, Hosea xiv. 9, II.; John xvi. 13, 1 John ii. 20, 27, Eph. iv. 14, Job xxxvi. 22, John vi. 45, III.; and, 2. Into *the especial nature* of the Spirit's work in enlightening us into a knowledge of the mind of God in Scripture. Its nature is first considered by a reference to several scriptural expressions descriptive of it, such as "opening the eyes," "translating out of darkness into light," "giving understanding," "teaching," and "shining into our hearts," IV. As preparatory to what follows in explanation of the Spirit's work in enlightening the mind, a digression is introduced on the causes of spiritual ignorance, which are classified into three divisions:—the natural vanity of the depraved mind; the working of corrupt affections; and the deceitful influence of Satan. The way in which the Spirit operates *directly on our minds* for the removal of all those causes of spiritual ignorance, by communicating spiritual light, purging from corrupt affections, and implanting spiritual habits and principles, is explained, V. His work for the production of the same effect *by means of Scripture itself* next comes under review; and under this head three points, in regard, (1.) To the arrangement, (2.) The subject-matter of Scripture, and (3.) Difficulties in Scripture, are considered. (1.) On the first of these points, advantages are exhibited as resulting from the want of formal system in revelation; the ministry of the gospel is felt to be of value, faith and obedience are brought into special exercise, and search into the *whole* of Scripture is rendered necessary. (2.) The subject-matter of revelation is proved to contain all things requisite for faith and practice. (3.) The difficulties in Scripture include, first, things "hard to be understood;" and, secondly, things "hard to be interpreted." Rules for the management of these difficulties are supplied, VI.

II. As to the MEANS for the understanding of Scripture, two kinds are specified:—1. Such as are general and necessary, as the reading of Scripture; and, 2. Such as are expedient and conducive to the improvement of it. And the latter are threefold:—(1.) *Spiritual* means, such as prayer, susceptibility of gracious impressions, practical obedience, desire for progress in knowledge, and attention to the ordinances of worship, VII.; (2.) *Disciplinary*, skill in the original languages of Scripture, acquaintance with history, geography, and chronology, and expertness in reasoning, VIII; and, (3.) *Ecclesiastical*, under which the deference due to catholic tradition, the consent of the fathers, and pious authorship, is estimated, IX.—ED.

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THE PREFACE.

I SHALL in a few words give the reader an account of the occasion and design of the small ensuing discourse. Some while since I published a treatise about the "Reason of Faith, or the Grounds whereon we Believe the Scripture to be the Word of God," with that faith which is our duty, and pre-required unto all other acceptable obedience. But although this be the first fundamental principle of supernatural religion, yet is it not sufficient unto any of the ends thereof (that we believe the Scripture to be a divine revelation), unless we understand the mind and will of God therein revealed. At least, the knowledge and understanding of those things wherein our present duty and future state of blessedness or misery are immediately concerned, are no less indispensably necessary unto us than is the belief of the Scripture to be the word of God. To declare the ways and means whereby we may assuredly attain that understanding is the design of the ensuing discourse, as those whereby we come infallibly to believe the Scripture with faith divine and supernatural are the subject of the former. My principal scope in both hath been, to manifest that such is the abundant goodness, wisdom, and grace of God, in granting unto us the inestimable benefit of his word, that no persons whatever shall or can come short of the advantage intended by it but through their own sinful negligence and ingratitude,—the highest crimes in things of a spiritual and eternal concernment; for he hath given such convincing evidences of the procedure or emanation of the Scripture from himself, by the divine inspiration of the penmen thereof, and so plainly declared his mind and will therein as unto the faith and obedience which he requires of any or all sorts of persons in their various circumstances, that every one who takes care of his own present and eternal welfare may and shall, in the due use of the means by him appointed, and discharge of the duties by him prescribed unto that end, with a due dependence on the aid and assistance which he will not withhold from any who diligently seek him, infallibly attain such measure of the knowledge of his mind and will, with full assurance therein, as will be sufficient to guide him unto eternal blessedness. The same measure of divine knowledge is not required in all and every one, that they may live unto God and come unto the enjoyment of him. The dispensation of God towards mankind, in nature, providence, and grace, is an invincible spring of such variety among them, as will not allow a prescription of the same measures of knowledge unto all who have a consistency with divine wisdom and goodness; and a supposition of it would bring confusion into all the order of things and persons which is of divine constitution. Nor is it pretended that any one man may or can have, in the use of any means whatever, a full comprehension of all divine revelations in this life, nor perhaps of any one of them; or that all men, in the use of the same means prescribed unto them, shall have the same conceptions of all things revealed. The Scripture was given for the use of the whole church, and that in all ages, states, and conditions, with respect unto that inconceivable variety of circumstances which all sorts of causes do distribute the whole multitude of them into. Wherefore, the wisdom of God therein hath suited itself unto the instruction of every individual believer, unto the moment of his entrance into eternity. That any one of them, that any society of them, should have a perfect comprehension of the entire revelation of God, or a perfect understanding of the whole Scripture, and every part of it, with all that is contained therein, was never required of them in a way of duty, nor ever designed unto them in a way of privilege: for besides that he hath replenished it with unfathomable stores, unsearchable treasures of divine mysteries, wherein we cannot find out the Almighty unto perfection, and hath provided another state for the comprehension of that by sight which is the object of adoration and admiration in believing, such knowledge is not necessary unto any that they may lead the life of faith, and discharge the duties thereof, in all holy obedience unto God; yea, such a knowledge

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and comprehension would be inconsistent with that state and condition wherein we are to walk with God, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, and during the continuance thereof. But the substance of what we plead for is, that such is the wisdom, goodness, and love of God towards mankind, in the grant that he hath made unto them of the revelation of himself, his mind and will, in the Scripture, as that no one person doth or can fail of attaining all that understanding in it and of it which is any way needful for his guidance to live unto God in his circumstances and relations, so as to come unto the blessed enjoyment of him, but by the sinful neglect of the means and duties prescribed by him for the attainment of that understanding, and want of a due dependence on those spiritual aids and assistances which he hath prepared for that end. By what ways and means he hath thus provided for the assurance and security of all men, in things of their eternal concernment, and what are those acts of his wisdom, power, and grace, which he exerts for that end,—namely, that they may both believe the Scripture to be his word, and understand his mind revealed therein, both according unto what is required of them in a way of duty, so as in both they may be accepted with him,—is the design of this and the other forementioned discourse to declare. And they are both of them principally intended for the use of the ordinary sort of Christians, who know it their concernment to be established in the truth of those things wherein they have been instructed; for they are frequently attacked with these questions, "How do you know the Scriptures to be the word of God? and what assurance have you that you understand any thing contained in them, seeing all sorts of persons are divided about their sense and meaning, nor do you pretend unto any immediate inspiration to give you assurance?" And if, on these ensnaring inquiries, they are cast under any doubts or perplexities in their minds, as it often falls out amongst them who have not diligently weighed the principles of their own profession, the next insinuation is, that they ought to betake themselves either to some other present guide, as their own light and reason, or make a complete resignation of themselves and the conduct of their souls unto the pretended authority and guidance of other men. To give assurance and security unto their minds that they neither are nor can be deceived in the belief of the Scriptures to be the word of God, and [as to] the understanding of his mind and will therein, so far as their present obedience and eternal happiness are concerned, and that unto this end they need not be beholding unto any, nor depend on any but God himself, in the use of known and obvious means or duties, is designed in these small treatises. And upon the principles evinced and confirmed in them, I have yet proposed a farther inquiry,—namely, What conduct, in these times of great contests about the assurance of faith, and the causes of it, every one that takes care of his own salvation ought to betake himself unto, that he may not be deceived nor miscarry in the end: and this is designed with especial respect unto the church of Rome, which vehemently pretends unto the sole infallible conduct in these things. But probably the near approach of the daily-expected and earnestly-desired hour of my discharge from all farther service in this world will prevent the accomplishment of that intention.[1] In the continual prospect hereof do I yet live and rejoice; which, among other advantages unspeakable, hath already given me an unconcernment in those oppositions which the passions or interests of men engage them in, of a very near alliance unto, and scarce distinguishable from, that which the grave will afford. I have but one thing more to acquaint the reader withal, wherewith I shall close this preface, and it is the same with that wherewith the preface unto the former discourse is concluded:—This also belongeth unto the second part of my discourse concerning the dispensation and operations of the Holy Spirit. The first volume on that subject, some years since published, having found good acceptance among them that are godly and learned, both at home and abroad, I have been desired to give out what yet remaineth for the complete accomplishment of what I had designed thereon in this way of lesser discourses, that may have their use before the whole be finished, or whether ever it be so or no.

[1] In 1679, Dr Owen published a small treatise answering this description, under the title of "The Church of Rome no Safe Guide." It forms a part of his controversial writings. See vol. xiv.—Ed.

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ΣΥΝΕΣΙΣ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΗ.

CHAPTER I.

Usurpation of the church of Rome with reference unto the interpretation of the Scripture, or right understanding of the mind of God therein—Right and ability of all believers as to their own duty herein asserted—Importance of the truth proposed—The main question stated—The principal efficient cause of the understanding which believers have in the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scriptures, the Spirit of God himself—General assertions to be proved—Declared in sundry particulars—Inferences from them.

Our belief of the Scriptures to be the word of God, or a divine revelation, and our understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in them, are the *two springs* of all our interest in Christian religion. From them are all those streams of light and truth derived whereby our souls are watered, refreshed, and made fruitful unto God. It therefore concerneth us greatly to look well to those *springs*, that they be neither stopped nor defiled, and so rendered useless unto us. Though a man may have pleasant streams running by his habitation and watering his inheritance, yet if the springs of them be in the power of others, who can either divert their course or poison their waters, on their pleasure he must always depend for the benefit of them.

Thus hath it fallen out in the world in this matter; so hath the *church of Rome* endeavoured to deal with all Christians. Their main endeavour is, to seize those *springs* of religion into their own power. The Scripture itself, they tell us, cannot be believed to be the word of God with faith divine but upon the proposal and testimony of their church; thereby is one *spring* secured. And when it is believed so to be, it *ought* not to be interpreted, it *cannot* be understood, but according to the mind, judgment, and exposition of the same church; which in like manner secures the other. And having of old possessed these *springs* of Christian religion, they have dealt with them according as might be expected from unjust invaders of other men's rights and *malæ fidei possessoribus*. So when the Philistines contended for the wells which Abraham and Isaac had digged, when they had got possession of them they stopped

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them up; and when the scribes and Pharisees had gotten the *key of knowledge*, they would neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer those that would, so to do, as our Saviour tells us. For the one of these *springs*, which is the *letter* of the Scripture itself, when it ought to have gone forth like the *waters of the sanctuary*, to refresh the church and make it fruitful unto God, they partly stopped it up and partly diverted its course, by shutting it up in an *unknown tongue* and debarring the people from the use of it. And in the exercise of their pretended right unto the other *spring*, or the *sole interpretation* of the Scripture, they have poisoned the streams with all manner of errors and delusions, so as that they became not only useless, but noxious and pernicious unto the souls of men; for under the pretence hereof,—namely, that their church hath the *sole power of interpreting the Scriptures*, and *cannot err* therein,—have they obtruded all their errors, with all their abominations in worship and practice, on the minds and consciences of men.

The first of these *springs* I have in a former discourse on this subject taken out of their hand, so far as we ourselves are concerned therein, or I have vindicated the just right of all Christians thereunto, and given them possession thereof. This I did by declaring the true grounds and reasons whereon we do, and whereon any can, truly *believe the Scripture to be the word of God* with faith divine and supernatural; for besides other advantages wherewith the knowledge of that truth is accompanied, it dispossesseth the Romanists of their claim unto this fountain of religion, by evidencing that we do and ought thus to believe the divine original of the Scripture, without any regard to the testimony or authority of their church.

That which now lieth before us is, the vindication of the right of all believers unto the *other spring also*, or a right understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, suitably unto the duty that God requireth of them in their several capacities and conditions.

What is necessary unto the *interpretation of difficult places* and passages in the Scripture, and what measure of understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed therein is required of persons in their various conditions, as they are teachers of others or among the number of them that are to be taught, shall, among other things, be afterward spoken unto. My principal design is, to manifest that *every believer may, in the due use of the means appointed of God for that end, attain unto such a full assurance of understanding in the truth, or all that knowledge of the mind and will of God revealed in the Scripture, which is sufficient to direct him in the life of God, to deliver him from the dangers of ignorance, dark-*

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ness, and error, and to conduct him unto blessedness. Wherefore, as unto the belief of the Scripture itself, so as unto the understanding, knowledge, and faith of the things contained therein, we do not depend on the *authoritative interpretation* of any church or person whatever. And although ordinary believers are obliged to make diligent and conscientious use of the *ministry of the church*, among other things, as a means appointed of God to lead, guide, and instruct them in the knowledge of his mind and will revealed in the Scripture, which is the principal end of that ordinance; yet is not their understanding of the truth, their apprehension of it and faith in it, to rest upon or to be resolved into their authority, who are not appointed of God to be *lords of their faith*, but *helpers of their joy.* And thereon depends all our interest in that great promise, that we *shall be all taught of God;* for we are not so unless we do learn from him and by him the things which he hath revealed in his word.

And there is not any truth of greater importance for men to be established in; for unless they have a *full assurance of understanding in themselves*, unless they hold their persuasion of the sense of Scripture revelations from God alone, if their spiritual judgment of truth and falsehood depend on the authority of men, they will never be able to undergo any suffering for the truth or to perform any duty unto God in a right manner. The truths of the gospel and the ways of religious worship, for which any believer may be called to suffer in this world, are such as about *whose sense* and *revelation in the Scripture* there is great difference and controversy among men; and if there be not an assured, yea, infallible way and means of communicating unto all believers a knowledge of the mind and will of God in the Scripture concerning those things so controverted, the grounds whereof are fixed in their own minds, but that they do wholly depend on the expositions and *interpretations* of other men: be they who they will, they cannot *suffer* for them either cheerfully or honourably, so as to give glory to God, or to obtain any solid peace and comfort in their own souls; for if a man under his *sufferings* for his profession can give himself no other account but this, that what he suffers for is the truth of God revealed in the Scripture, because such or such whom he hath in veneration or esteem do so affirm and have so instructed him, or because this is the doctrine of this or that church, the *papal* or the *reformed church*, which it hath prescribed unto him, he will have little joy of his suffering in the end. Yea, there is that which is yet worse in this matter, as things are stated at this day in the world. Truth and error are promiscuously *persecuted*, according unto the judgment, interest, and inclinations of them that are in power; yea, sometimes both truth

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and error are persecuted in the same place and at the same time, upon errors differing from both. Dissent is grown almost all that is criminal in Christian religion all the world over. But in this state of things, unless we grant men an immediate *understanding of their own* in the mind and will of God, yea, a *full assurance* therein, there will be nothing whereby a man who suffers for the most important truths of the gospel can in his own soul and conscience distinguish himself from those who suffer in giving testimony unto the most pernicious errors; for all outward means of confidence which he hath, they may have also.

It therefore behoveth all those who may possibly be called to *suffer for the truth* in any season, or on any occasion, to assure their minds in this fundamental truth, that they may have in themselves a certain undeceiving understanding of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, independent on the authority of any church or persons whatsoever; the use of whose ministry herein we do yet freely and fully allow.

Nor, indeed, without a supposition hereof, can any man perform any duty to God in an acceptable manner, so as that his obedience may be the *obedience of faith*, nor can upon good grounds die in peace, since the *just shall live by his own faith alone.*

Wherefore, our present inquiry is,—

How believers, or any men whatever, may attain a right understanding in their own minds of the meaning and sense of the Scriptures, as to the doctrine or truths contained in them, in answer unto the design of God, as unto what he would have us know or believe; or,—

How they may attain a right perception of the mind of God in the Scripture, and what he intends in the revelation of it, in opposition unto ignorance, errors, mistakes, and all false apprehensions, and so in a right manner to perform the duties which by it we are instructed in.

In answer unto the inquiry proposed concerning the knowledge and understanding of believers in the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures, I shall consider,—

First, The *principal efficient cause;* and, secondly, *All the means*, internal and external, which are appointed of God thereunto.

As to the first of these, or the principal efficient cause of the due knowledge and understanding of the will of God in the Scripture, it is the *Holy Spirit of God himself alone;* for,—

There is an especial work of the Spirit of God on the minds of men, communicating spiritual wisdom, light, and understanding unto them, necessary unto their discerning and apprehending aright the mind of God in his word, and the understanding of the

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mysteries of heavenly truth contained therein. And I shall add hereunto, that among all the false and foolish imaginations that ever Christian religion was attacked or disturbed withal, there never was any, there is none more pernicious than this, that the mysteries of the gospel are so exposed unto the common reason and understanding of men as that they may know them and comprehend them in a *useful manner*, and *according to their duty*, without the effectual aid and assistance of the Spirit of God.

It is the fondest thing in the world to imagine that the Holy Ghost doth any way teach us but *in and by our own reasons* and understandings. We renounce all *enthusiasms* in this matter, and plead not for any immediate *prophetical inspirations*. Those who would prohibit us the use of our reason in the things of religion would deal with us as the Philistines did with Samson,—first put out our eyes, and then make us grind in their mill. Whatever we know, be it of what sort it will, we know it in and by the use of our reason; and what we conceive, we do it by our own understanding: only the inquiry is, whether there be not an especial work of the Holy Spirit of God, *enlightening our minds* and enabling our understandings to perceive and apprehend his mind and will as revealed in the Scripture, and without which we cannot so do. The substance, therefore, of the ensuing discourse may be reduced unto these heads:—

I. That we stand not in need of any new divine *afflations*, or immediate *prophetical inspirations*, to enable us to understand the Scripture, or the mind and will of God as revealed therein; neither did the prophets or holy penmen of the Scripture *learn the mind of God* in the revelations made unto them, and by them unto the church, merely from the *divine inspiration* of them. Those immediate inspirations unto them were in the stead and place of the *written word*, and no otherwise. After they did receive them, they were by the same means to inquire into the mind and will of God in them as we do it in and by the written word, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11.

II. That as to the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture, or our coming unto the *riches of the full assurance of understanding in the acknowledgment of the mystery of God*, we do not, nor need to depend on the *authoritative instruction* or interpretation of the Scripture by *any church* whatever, or all of them in the world, though there be great use of the true ministry of the church unto that end.

III. That in the *mere exercise of our own natural reason and understanding*, with the help of external means, we cannot attain that knowledge of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, of the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost therein, which is required of

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us in a way of duty, without the special aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit of God. Wherefore, principally, it is asserted,—

IV. That there is an especial work of the Holy Spirit, in the *supernatural illumination* of our minds, needful unto the end proposed, —namely, that we may aright, and according unto our duty, understand the mind of God in the Scripture ourselves, or interpret it unto others.

V. That hereby alone is that full *assurance of understanding in the knowledge of the mystery of God*, his truth and grace, to be obtained, whereby any man may answer the mind and will of God, or comply with his own duty in all that he may be called to do or suffer in this world in his especial circumstances. Wherefore,—

VI. The certainty and assurance that we may have and ought to have of our right understanding the mind of God in the Scripture, either in general or as to any especial doctrine, doth not depend upon, is not resolved into, any *immediate inspiration or enthusiasm;* it doth not depend upon nor is resolved into the *authority of any church* in the world; nor is it the *result of our reason and understanding* merely in their natural actings, but as they are elevated, enlightened, guided, conducted, by an internal efficacious work of the Spirit of God upon them.

VII. That whereas the means of the right interpretation of the Scripture, and understanding of the mind of God therein, are of two sorts,—first, such as are prescribed unto us in a way of duty, as *prayer*, *meditation* on the word itself, and the like; and, secondly, *disciplinary*, in the accommodation of *arts and sciences*, with all kind of learning, unto that work,—the first sort of them doth entirely depend on a supposition of the spiritual aids mentioned, without which they are of no use; and the latter is not only consistent therewith, but singularly subservient thereunto. Wherefore, the nature and use of all these means shall be afterward declared.

This being the substance of what is designed in the ensuing discourse, it is evident that the positions before laid down concerning the *especial work* of the Spirit on the minds of men, in communicating spiritual wisdom, light, and knowledge unto them, is in the first place and principally to be confirmed, as that whereon all the other assertions do absolutely depend.

It is the Scripture itself alone from whence the truth in this matter can be learned, and by which alone what is proposed concerning it must be tried; therefore, as unto this first part of this work, I shall do little more than plead the express testimonies thereof. When we come to consider the way and manner of the communication of these spiritual aids unto us, the whole matter will be more fully stated, and such objections as may be laid against our assertion removed out of the way.

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And there are two ends designed in this undertaking:—

First, That which the evangelist Luke proposed in his writing the Gospel unto Theophilus,—namely, "That he might know the certainty of the things wherein he had been instructed," Luke i. 4. When we have been instructed in the truth of the gospel, and do give our assent thereunto, yet it is needful that we should examine the grounds and reasons of what we do believe thereon, that we may have a *certainty* or *full assurance* of them. This, therefore, we shall direct,—namely, how a man may come to an *undeceiving persuasion and full assurance* that the things wherein he hath been instructed, and which he knows, are true and according to the mind of God, so as that he may thereon be "no more tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Secondly, We design to inquire *what conduct* unto this end a man that takes care of his salvation, and who is convinced that he must give an account of himself unto God, ought in this matter, as to the right understanding of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, *to betake himself unto.* And as I shall show that there is no safety in depending on *enthusiasms*, or immediate pretended infallible inspirations, nor on the *pretended infallibility* of any church, *so the Holy Spirit of God, enlightening our minds in the exercise of our own reason or understanding, and in use of the means appointed of God unto that end, is the only safe guide to bring us unto the full assurance of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture.*

Wherefore, the whole foundation of this work lies in these two things:—

1. That there *is* such an *especial work* of the Holy Spirit on our minds, enabling them to understand the Scriptures in a right manner, or to know the mind of God in them;

2. In showing what is the *especial nature* of this work, what are the effects of it upon our minds, and how it differs from all *enthusiastical inspirations*, and what is the true exercise of our minds in compliance therewith. And these things we shall first inquire into.

CHAPTER II.

The general assertion confirmed with testimonies of the Scripture—Ps. cxix. 18 opened at large—Objections answered—2 Cor. iii. 13–18, Isa. xxv. 7, explained—Luke xxiv. 44, 45, opened—Eph. i. 17–19 explained and pleaded in confirmation of the truth—Hos. xiv. 9.

THE whole of our assertion is comprised in the prayer of the psalmist, Ps. cxix. 18, גַּל־עֵינַי וְאַבִּיטָה נִפְלָאוֹת מִתּוֹרָתֶךָ,—"Open thou

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mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The same request, for the substance of it, is repeated sundry times in the same psalm, verses 33, 34, etc. *Thus he* prayed. That it may be esteemed *our* duty to pray in *like manner* is the substance of what we plead for. What we pray for from God, that we have not in and of ourselves, as the ancient church constantly pleaded against the Pelagians; and what we pray for according to the mind of God, that we do receive. Wherefore, our discerning, our understanding, of the wonderful things of the law, is not of ourselves; it is that which is given us, that which we receive from God.

But that the force of our argument from this testimony may be the more evident, the words or terms of it must be explained, that we may see whether they be equivalent unto, or of the same signification with, those laid down in our assertion:—

1. That which is the *object* of the understanding prayed for, that in the knowledge whereof the psalmist would be illuminated, is תּוֹרָה. The word signifies instruction; and being referred unto God, it is his teaching or instruction of us by the revelation of himself, —the same which we intend by the Scripture. When the books of the Old Testament were completed, they were, for distinction's sake, distributed into תּוֹרָה, כְּתוּבִים, and נְבִיאִים, or, the "Law," the "Psalms," and the "Prophets," Luke xxiv. 44. Under that distribution *Torah* signifies the five books of Moses. But whereas these books of Moses were, as it were, the foundation of all future revelations under the Old Testament, which were given in the explication thereof, all the writings of it are usually called "the Law," Isa. viii. 20. By the *law*, therefore, in this place, the psalmist understands all the books that were then given unto the church by revelation for the rule of its faith and obedience. And that by the *law*, in the psalms, the written law is intended, is evident from the first of them, wherein he is declared blessed who "meditateth therein day and night," Ps. i. 2; which hath respect unto the command of reading and meditating on the *books thereof* in that manner, Josh. i. 8. That, therefore, which is intended by this word is the entire revelation of the will of God, given unto the church for the rule of its faith and obedience,—that is, the holy Scripture.

2. In this law there are נִפְלָאוֹת, "wonderful things." פָּלָא signifies to be "wonderful," to be "hidden," to be "great" and "high;" that which men by the use of reason cannot attain unto or understand (hence נִפְלָאוֹת are things that have such an impression of divine wisdom and power upon them as that they are justly the object of our admiration); that which is too hard for us; as Deut. xvii. 8, כִּי יִפָּלֵא מִמְּךָ דָבָר,—"If a matter be too hard for thee," hid from thee. And it is the name whereby the miraculous works of God are

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expressed, Ps. lxxvii. 11, lxxviii. 11. Wherefore, these "wonderful things of the law" are those expressions and effects of divine wisdom in the Scripture which are above the natural reason and understandings of men to find out and comprehend. Such are the mysteries of divine truth in the Scripture, especially because Christ is in them, whose name is פֶּלֶא, or "Wonderful," Isa. ix. 6; for all the great and marvellous effects of infinite wisdom meet in him. These things and doctrines God calls רַבּוֹ תּוֹרָתִי, Hos. viii. 12: "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted כְּמוֹ זָר, as a strange thing." Because they were "wonderful" in themselves, they neglected and despised them, as that which was foreign and *alien* from them, which belonged not unto them. So deal many with the mysteries of the gospel at this day; because they are heavenly, spiritual, in themselves marvellous, hidden, and above the understanding of the natural reason of men,—that is, they are נִפְלָאוֹת, "wonderful,"—they reject and despise them as things *alien* and foreign unto their religion. Wherefore, the "wonderful things" of the Scripture are those mysteries of divine truth, wisdom, and grace, that are revealed and contained therein, with their especial respect unto Jesus Christ.

3. Three things are supposed in the words concerning these "wonderful things:"—

(1.) That they are *recorded*, laid up, or treasured, in the law or Scripture, and nowhere else, so as that from thence alone are they to be learned and received: "Behold wondrous things out of thy law." That alone is the sacred παραχαραθήκη, or "repository" of them. There are wondrous things in the works of nature and providence, and much of them is contained in the treasury of reason, wherein it may be discerned; but these are stored in the law only, and nowhere else.

(2.) That it is our duty to *behold*, to *discern*, to *understand* them, to have an inspection into them; and our great privilege when we are enabled so to do. This makes the psalmist pray so frequently, so fervently, that he may have the discerning of them, or come to an acquaintance with them. Those, therefore, by whom they are neglected do both despise their duty and forsake their own mercy.

(3.) That we are not *able of ourselves* thus to discern them without divine aid and assistance; for the psalmist, who was wiser than the wisest of us, and who had so earnest a desire after these things, yet would not trust unto his own reason, wisdom, ability, and diligence, for the understanding of them, but betakes himself unto God by prayer, acknowledging therein that it is *the especial work of God by his Spirit to enable us to understand his mind and will as revealed in the Scripture.*

4. There is expressed in the words the *act of God* towards us,

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whereby he enableth us to behold, discern, and understand the wonderful effects of divine wisdom which are treasured up in the Scripture; which the psalmist prayeth for. This is called his "opening of our eyes:" גַּל־עֵינַי, "Reveal mine eyes, uncover, unveil mine eyes." There is a light in the word; all truth is light, and sacred truth is sacred light; yea, the word of God is expressly called "light," Ps. xxxvi. 9, xliii. 3, cxix. 105. But there is by nature a *covering*, a *veil*, on the eyes of the understandings of all men, so that they are not able of themselves to behold this *light*, nor to discern any thing by it in a due manner. With respect hereunto the psalmist prays that God would "reveal his eyes." *Revelare* is *velamentum levare;* "to reveal is to take off the veil or covering." And this veil is that of our natural darkness, blindness, and ignorance; whereof we have treated elsewhere.

I see not what is wanting unto the explanation or confirmation of the position before laid down. The communication of spiritual light from God is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost. He is the immediate author of all spiritual illumination. But hereby alone, or by virtue hereof, can we know or understand the mind of God in the Scripture, in such a manner as God requireth us to do; and whosoever hath received the grace of this divine *illumination* may do so, so far as he is concerned, in point of faith or obedience.

The *law* is the *Scripture*, the written word of God. Therein are "wonderful things," or mysteries of divine wisdom, contained and revealed. To *behold these things*, is to discern and understand them aright with respect unto our own faith and obedience. This we cannot do without a *supernatural act* of the Spirit of God upon our minds, enabling them to discern them and understand them; these things are in the text ἀναντιῤῥήτως ["indisputably."] And we hence farther argue, that which is our duty to pray for *spiritual, supernatural aid* to enable us to do, that of *ourselves* we are not able to do without that aid and assistance, at least we may do it by virtue of that aid and assistance; which includes the substance, by just consequence, of what is pleaded for. But such *aid* it is our duty to pray for, that we may understand aright the revelations of the mind and will of God in the Scriptures,—the only thing to be proved.

There is but one thing which I can foresee that may with any pretence of reason be objected unto this testimony of the psalmist in particular; and this is, that he speaks of the times and writings of the *Old Testament*. "Now, it is confessed that there was in them a *darkness* and obscurity, and such as needed *new revelations* for the understanding of them; but since all things are 'brought to light by the gospel,' there is no need of any special aid or assistance of the Holy Spirit, by *supernatural illumination*, for the understanding

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of them." In answer hereunto I shall consider the discourse of the apostle wherein he stateth this whole matter: 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 16–18, "And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away, in the reading of the Old Testament; which is done away in Christ. . . . Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord" (or, they be turned unto the Lord) "the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with open face behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

When Moses had received the *revelation* of the law from God, "his face shone," Exod. xxxiv. 29; for there were wonderful things contained in that revelation with respect unto Jesus Christ,—he was in them all, and the end of them all. The whole ministry of Moses was but a testimony given unto the things that were *afterward to be spoken* concerning him, as the apostle declares, Heb. iii. 5.

On the receipt of this revelation "his face shone," because there was a light, a lustre, a glory, in the things revealed unto him, and by them reflected on his ministry, which was so represented. Nevertheless, this *light* did not shine immediately into the hearts and minds of the people. They did not see or discern the glorious and "wonderful things" that were in the law; for there was a *double veil* or covering that hindered them,—one that was put on *Moses' face,* another that was on their *own hearts.* Some dark apprehensions and glances of light they had, but "they could not look steadfastly unto the end of that which was to be abolished;" they could not comprehend the truth concerning Christ, which was the substance and end of the law.

The *first veil,* that which was on the face of Moses, was the obscurity of the instructions given them, as wrapped up in *types, shadows,* and *dark parables.* This they could not see through, so as clearly to discern the "wonderful things" contained in and under them. This *veil* is quite taken off in the revelation or *doctrine of the gospel,* wherein "life and immortality are brought to light," and the wonderful things of the mystery of God in Christ are fully declared and plainly expressed. Herein, therefore, it is acknowledged that there is a great difference between those under the *Old* Testament and those under the *New.*

But, saith the apostle, there is *another veil,* a *veil upon the heart.* And hereof he declareth two things:—1. That this veil is *done away only in Christ;* and, 2. That therefore it is not taken away from any but those who are *converted unto God.* This is the *covering* of ignorance, darkness, blindness, that is on men by nature. The *former*

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veil is taken away by the *doctrine of the gospel;* this latter is to be removed only by an *effectual work of the Spirit of Christ,* in the conversion of the souls of men unto God.

And two things do ensue on the removal of this *double veil*:— 1. That as unto the doctrine itself concerning the mystery of God in Christ, it is no more represented unto us in *types, shadows,* and *dark parables,* but in the clear *glass of the gospel,* whereon the glory of Christ is reflected. Hereby the *veil* is taken off from the *face of Moses.* 2. That we have προσωπον ἀνακεκαλυμμένον, an "open, uncovered face," or, as the Syriac reads it, a "revealed eye," whereby we are enabled to discern the wonderful mysteries of God so revealed. This ensues on the taking away of the *second veil* of darkness and blindness, which is on the hearts of all by nature.

The removal and destruction of this *double veil* by the Spirit and grace of the gospel is that which is prophesied of, Isa. xxv. 7, "He will destroy in this mountain the face הַלּוֹט הַלּוֹט, of the covering covered," or the double veil, "that is on the face of all people, and וְהַמַּסֵּכָה הַנָּסוּכָה, the veil veiled over all nations."

This being the design of the discourse of the apostle, it is evident that although there be a difference between them under the *Old Testament* and us as to the *veil* that was on the *face of Moses,* which is destroyed and removed by the *doctrine of the gospel,* yet there is none as to the *veil* which is on the *hearts* of all by nature, which must be removed by the *Holy Spirit,* or we cannot "with *open face* behold the glory of the Lord,"—the thing which the psalmist prayeth for in the place insisted on; that is, that God by his Spirit would more and more renew his mind, and take away his natural darkness and ignorance, that he might be able to behold, perceive, and understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. And if any shall suppose or say, that for their part they need no such especial *aid* and *assistance* to enable them to understand the mind of God in the Scripture, which is sufficiently exposed to the common reason of all mankind, I shall only say at present, I am afraid they do not understand those places of Scripture where this *aid* and *assistance* is so expressly affirmed to be necessary thereunto.

But the meaning of the psalmist will the better appear if we consider the communication of the grace which he prayed for unto others. This is expressed, Luke xxiv. 45, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures;"—a needless work if some men may be believed; but our Lord Jesus Christ thought not so. The truths concerning him were revealed in the Scripture, that is, in the law, and the prophets, and the psalms, verse 44. These they read, these they were instructed in, these were preached unto them every Sabbath-day; and probably they were as

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well skilled in the *literal sense* of Scripture propositions as those who pretend highest amongst us so to be. Howbeit they could not understand those "wonderful things" in a way of duty, and as they ought to do, until the Lord Christ "opened their understandings." There was needful unto them an immediate gracious act of his divine power on their minds to enable them thereunto; and I cannot yet much value those men's understanding of the Scripture whose *understandings are not opened* by the Spirit of Christ.

If we need the *opening of our understandings* by an act of the power and grace of Christ, that we may *understand the Scriptures*, then without it we cannot so do, namely, so as to believe and yield obedience, according unto our duty. The consequence is evident; for if we could, there was no need of this act of Christ towards those disciples, who were not destitute of any *rational abilities* required in us thereunto. And the act of Christ in "opening their understanding" is openly distinguished from the proposition of the doctrine of the Scripture unto them. This was made two ways:—first, In the *Scripture* itself; secondly, In the oral discourse of our Saviour upon it. Distinct from both these is that act of his whereby he "opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." Wherefore, nothing but a *real internal act of grace*, in the illumination of their minds, can be intended thereby; the nature whereof shall be farther explained afterward.

But there is an eminent place that must be pleaded distinctly to this purpose: Eph. i. 17–19, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."

This is the whole of what we would assert, and nothing else. And if men would acquiesce by faith in what is here declared, we [would] need to plead this cause no farther, for the *words and expressions* of the truth here used are more *emphatical* unto a spiritual understanding than any others we can find out; and I shall only show in the opening of them how our position and sense are contained in them. And,—1. What the apostle doth here for others, it is unquestionably our duty to do for ourselves. We are, then, to pray that God *would enable us by his Spirit to know and understand his mind and will as revealed in the Scripture.* This, therefore, without especial aid and assistance from him by his Spirit, we cannot do. And the *aid* he gives us consists in the *effectual illumination* of our minds, or the enlightening of the eyes of our understandings. These things are

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plain, and not liable, as I suppose, to any exception; and these are all we plead for. Let them be granted without any other distinctions or limitations but what the Scripture will justify, and there is an end of this difference. But some particular passages in the words may be considered, for the better understanding and farther confirmation of the truth contained therein:—

1. It is a *revelation* that the apostle prays for, or a *Spirit of revelation* to be given unto them. This greatly offends some at first hearing, but wholly without cause; for he understands not a new *immediate external revelation from God.* Believers are not directed to look after such revelations for their guide. Ever since the Scripture was written, the generality of the church was obliged to attend thereunto alone, as their only rule of faith and obedience. And although God reserved unto himself a liberty under the Old Testament, and until the completing of all the books of the New, to add *new revelations* as he pleased, yet he always bound up the faith and obedience of the *present church* unto what he had already revealed. And he hath now, by the Spirit of his Son, put an end unto all expectation of any *new*, of any *other* revelations, wherein the faith or obedience of the church should be concerned; at least, we take it for granted in this inquiry that *infallible inspirations* in the discovery of things not before revealed are ceased in the church. Nor do the *Papists* extend their *infallibility* thereunto, but only unto things already revealed in the Scripture or tradition. What some among ourselves do ascribe of this nature unto their *light*, I do not well know, nor shall now inquire.

But there is an *internal subjective revelation*, whereby no *new things* are revealed unto our minds, or are not outwardly revealed *anew*, but our minds are enabled to discern the things that are revealed already. All the things here mentioned by the apostle, which he desires they might *understand*, were already revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the New that were then written, and the infallible declaration of the gospel in the preaching of the apostles. But there was a new work of revelation required in and unto every person that would understand and comprehend these things in a due manner; for ἀποκάλυψις, or "revelation," is the *discovery* of any thing, whether by the *proposal* of it unto us, or the *enabling* of us to discern it when it is so proposed. In the first sense it is used, Rom. xvi. 25; 2 Cor. xii. 1, 7; Gal. i. 12, ii. 2;—in the latter, Luke ii. 32; Eph. i. 17, 18. As when God opened the eyes of the servant of Elisha, on the prayer of his master, to see the horses and chariots of fire that were round about him, 2 Kings vi. 17; they were not brought thither by the opening of his eyes, only he was enabled to discern them, which before he could not do: or, as

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when any one maketh use of a *telescope* to behold things afar off, no object is presented unto him but what was really in the same place before; only his *visive faculty* is assisted to discern them at that distance, which without that assistance it could not reach unto. And the Holy Spirit is here called "The Spirit of revelation" *causally*, as he is the author or principal efficient cause of it. So in his communication unto the Lord Christ himself, he is called "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD;" that should "make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD," Isa. xi. 2, 3.

2. What the psalmist, in the place before insisted on, calleth in general נִפְלָאוֹת, "wonderful things," the apostle expresseth in particular, and distributes them under sundry heads, as they were more clearly revealed in the gospel. Such are, "The hope of God's calling," "The riches of his glory," and "The exceeding greatness of his power in them that do believe." These are some of the principal and most important mysteries of the gospel. No other understanding can we have of these things but only as they are *revealed* therein, or of the revelation of them. And in the manner of his expression he declares these things to be "wonderful," as the psalmist speaks; for there is in them πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης, "the riches of glory,"—which is beyond our comprehension. So he expressly affirms that it is ἀνεξιχνίαστος, Eph. iii. 8, "past all investigation" or search; the same word that he useth to set forth the ways of God, when his design is to declare them *wonderful*, or the object of our admiration: Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And there is in them ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος, "an exceeding" or inexpressible "greatness of power."

Such are the things that are proposed unto us in the Scripture. And the principal reason why some men judge it so easy a matter to understand and comprehend by the *innate abilities* of their own minds the revelations that are made in the word of God unto us, is because they do not apprehend that there is any thing *wonderful*, or truly great and glorious in them. And, therefore, because they cannot raise their minds unto a comprehension of these mysteries as they are in themselves, they corrupt and debase them to suit them unto their own low, carnal apprehensions: which is the principle that works effectually in the whole of *Socinianism;* for grant that there are such "wonderful things," such mysteries, in the gospel as we plead, and the men of that persuasion will not deny but that our minds do stand in need of a heavenly assistance to comprehend them aright, for they deny them for no other reason but because their reason cannot comprehend them.

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3. Concerning these things so revealed in the word, the apostle prays for these Ephesians that they might *know them;* as also, he expresseth the way whereby alone they might be enabled so to do: Εἰς τὸ εἰδέναι ὑμᾶς,—"That ye might have a sight, perception, or understanding of them." This he denies a *natural man* to have, or that he can have; he "cannot know them," 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is true, it may be said he cannot know them unless they are *clearly* and fairly proposed unto him; no, nor then neither by the light and power of his own natural faculties. He cannot do so by the use of any outward means alone. It is futilous [vain] to imagine that the apostle intends only that a *natural man* cannot know things that are never proposed unto him, which is neither weakness nor discommendation; for neither can the *spiritual man* so know any thing.

Because it is thus with men by nature, therefore doth the apostle so earnestly pray that these Ephesians might be enabled to understand and know these things: and he doth it with an unusual solemnity, invocating the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory;" which argues both a great intension of spirit in him, and great weight laid upon the matter of his request.

But what reason is there for this earnestness? what is wanting unto these Ephesians? what would he yet have for them? were they not *rational men*, that had their eyes in their heads as well as others? nay, were not many of them learned men, and skilled in all the "curious arts" of those days? for here it was that so many upon their first conversion burnt their books to the value of "fifty thousand pieces of silver," Acts xix. 19. Probably they were many of them very knowing in the *new and old philosophy.* Had they not the Scripture also; that is, all the books of the Old Testament, and those of the New which were then written? Did not the apostle and others preach the doctrine of the gospel unto them, and therein the things which he here mentioneth? He declareth and expressly testifieth that he did, Acts xx. 20, 27. Speaking unto these very persons, that is, the leaders of them, he saith, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but declared unto you all the counsel of God,"—namely, "what is the hope of his calling, and what the greatness of his power." Were not these things sufficiently revealed, and clearly proposed unto them? If they were not, it was because the apostle *could not* so reveal and propose them, or because he *would not.* If he *could not*, then he prays that that might be revealed unto them which was not so to him, or that they might learn what he *could not teach them;* which is foolish and impious to imagine. If he *would* not, then he prays that they may know that which he would not teach them, but which he could easily have so done; which is equally foolish to suppose. What, therefore, do they yet lack? what

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is yet farther needful that they might know and understand these things? for we must know that we understand no more of the mind of God in the revelations that he makes unto us than we understand of the *things themselves* that are revealed by him.

I am persuaded that these Ephesians were generally as *wise*, and some of them as *learned*, as any in our days, let them have what conceit of themselves they please. Yet grant some of ours but thus much, that they have their wits about them and the use of their reason, and let them have the things of the gospel, or the doctrines of it, rationally proposed unto them, as they are in the Scripture, and they defy the world to think that they yet want any thing to enable them to *know* and rightly to understand them. "To fancy any thing else to be necessary hereunto is *fanatical* madness; for what would men have? what should ail them? Are not the doctrines of the gospel highly *rational?* are not the things of it eminently suited unto the *reason* of mankind? are not the books of the Scripture written in a style and language *intelligible?* Is there any thing more required unto the understanding of the mind of any author but to conceive the *grammatical* sense of the words that he useth, and the nature of his propositions and arguings? And although St Paul, as some say, *be one of the obscurest writers they ever met with*, yet surely by these means some good shift may be made with his writings also. It is, therefore, *canting and nonsense*, a reproach to reason and Christian religion itself, to think that this is not enough to enable men to understand the mind of God in the Scriptures."

Well, be it so, at present, as unto the highly *rational abilities* of some persons. It cannot be denied but that the apostle judged it necessary that these Ephesians should have the *special aid of the Spirit of God* unto this end, which he prayeth for; and we may be excused if we dare not think ourselves better than they, nor to have a sufficiency of learning, wisdom, and reason above others, or less to need prayers of this nature than they did. And we find that the apostle reneweth his prayer for them again unto the same purpose with great fervency, Eph. iii. 14–19. All the difference ariseth from hence, that the apostle judgeth that over and above the utmost exercise of our natural faculties and abilities, in the use of outward means, that we may know the mind of God in the Scripture, wherein these Ephesians were not wanting, it is necessary that the "eyes of our understanding" should be spiritually opened and "enlightened;" —but other men, it seems, think not so.

But if men should be allowed to suppose that our minds were no way vitiated, depraved, or darkened by the fall,—which supposition is the sole foundation of these assertions,—yet it is most irrational to imagine that we can comprehend and understand *the mysteries of*

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the gospel without especial *spiritual illumination;* for the original light and abilities of our minds were not suited or prepared for the receiving and understanding of them, for neither their being nor revelation was consistent with the state of integrity. Wherefore, although our minds should be allowed to be as wise and perspicacious with respect unto that natural knowledge of God and all that belongs unto it which was proposed unto us or necessary for us in the state of nature, yet would it not follow that we are able to discern the *mysteries of grace* when proposed unto us. The truth is, if our minds be not corrupted or depraved, there is no need of the gospel or its grace; and if they are, we cannot understand the mind of God therein without especial illumination.

But it may be said, "That these things are consistent; for notwithstanding men's *rational abilities* and the use of means, yet it is meet that they should both pray for themselves, and that others, whose duty it is, should pray for them also. It is so, that they may be *diligent* in their inquiries, and obtain the *blessing of God upon their diligence.* But this doth not prove at all that they are *not able of themselves* to apprehend and know the mind and things of God in the Scripture, or that any thing is wanting in them or to them which is absolutely necessary thereunto."

I answer, that on these suppositions there is indeed nothing wanting but that which the apostle moreover prayeth for, which is none of them; and if that be not also requisite unto this end, his prayer is vain and useless. That men be diligent in the discharge of their duty herein, and that they may have the especial blessing of God thereon, are here supposed, and we shall speak unto them afterward. These are not the things that the apostle here prayeth for, but that God would give them the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation, to enlighten the eyes of their understanding," that they may know them, as shall be immediately declared. And, indeed, I understand not how this prayer can be suited unto the principles of any who deny the necessity of this internal spiritual aid. For they cannot but think it strange to pray for a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" to be given unto their *whole congregations,*—which were a dangerous way, fitted to make them wiser than their teachers; and for themselves, besides using diligence, and praying for a blessing on their diligence, they disavow any farther concernment in this matter.

4. The thing in especial prayed for, in order unto the end proposed, is, "that the eyes of our understandings may be enlightened." This is the same which the psalmist prayeth for in the place before insisted on, that "God would open his eyes;" and it is the *internal work of illumination* that is intended. Now, although the main force of the argument depends on these words, yet shall I not

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insist here upon them, because I must speak somewhat more in particular unto the nature of this work afterward. Besides, what is that darkness which is here supposed to be on our minds or understandings, what is its nature, efficacy, and power, how it is taken away and removed, what is the nature of that spiritual light which is communicated unto us in and for the removal thereof, I have at large elsewhere declared.[1] All that at present I shall observe from these words is, in general, that there is an *especial work of the Spirit of God, in the enlightening the eyes of our understandings*, necessary unto our discerning of the mysteries of the gospel in a due manner; which was to be proved.

5. What is declared concerning the author of this work in us, or the principal efficient cause of it, doth farther confirm the same truth; and this is the *Holy Spirit*, "That he would give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." That the Holy Spirit is the immediate author of all supernatural effects and operations in us hath been elsewhere proved at large; and what he is promised or given in the gospel so to effect is not any thing that is in our own power. Wherefore, the ascription of the *communication of this ability* unto the Holy Ghost is a sufficient evidence that we want it in ourselves. And all things here affirmed concerning the manner of his communication unto us, and his properties as communicated, do evidence the nature and evince the truth of the work ascribed unto him. As for the first, it is by the *grant, donation*, or *free gift* of God the Father: Eph. iii. 17, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto you." God is called "The King of glory," Ps. xxiv. 7, 8, and "The God of glory," Acts vii. 2, with respect unto his own glorious majesty; but he is "The Father of glory" as he is the eternal spring and cause of all glory unto the church. And these titles are prefixed unto this grant or the request of it, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory," to intimate that it proceeds from his relation unto us in Christ, with that love and bounty wherein he is the cause of all grace and glory unto us. Wherefore, receiving this Spirit by *free donation*, as we do, Luke xi. 13, all that we receive from him and by him, we have it by the way of *free gift* or donation also. Therefore is this ability of *understanding the Scripture*, and the mysteries of the truth contained therein, a mere *free gift of God*, which he bestows on whom he will. So our Saviour told his disciples, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom or heaven, but to them" (to others) "it is not given," Matt. xiii. 11, who yet heard his words and understood the literal sense of the propositions used by him as well as the disciples did. Whoever, therefore, hath this ability to know the

[1] See his treatise on the Holy Spirit, book iii. chap. iii. vol. iii. of his works.—Ed.

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mysteries of the gospel, he hath it by *free gift* or donation from God. He hath received it, and may not boast as if it were from himself, and that he had not received it, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. iv. 7.

Again, the properties ascribed unto him, as thus communicated for this end, are "*wisdom* and *revelation*."

He is the "Spirit of wisdom." So in the communication of him in all fulness unto the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church, he is called "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding," Isa. xi. 2, and that because he was to make him of "quick understanding in the fear of the LORD," verse 3. He is a "Spirit of wisdom" essentially in himself, and *causally* or efficiently unto others; and these things do mutually demonstrate each other. That he is the cause of all wisdom in others, is a demonstration that he is *essentially* wise in himself; for "he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" And because he is essentially wise, he must be the author of all wisdom unto others; for all good must come from that which is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably so, James i. 17. He is, therefore, called "The Spirit of wisdom" on both these accounts,—as he is *essentially* so in himself, and as he is the *efficient cause* of all wisdom unto others; and it is in the latter way immediately that he is here so termed. And this property is peculiarly ascribed unto him, as thus given unto us to "open our eyes," with respect unto the work which he is to do; for wisdom is required hereunto,—that wisdom which may deliver us from being really *fools* ourselves, and from judging the things of God to be folly.

There is a wisdom required hereunto: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein," Hos. xiv. 9. Want of this wisdom is the cause that wicked men take offence at and dislike the ways of God, because they do not spiritually understand them, and so cast themselves into destruction. And it is of the same things that the prophet affirms, that "none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand," Dan. xii. 10. And it is called "The wisdom of the just," Luke i. 17.

This wisdom is not in us by nature. Men are naturally "wise in their own conceit;" which if continued in is a hopeless frame of mind, Prov. xxvi. 12: and in nothing doth it more evidence itself than in apprehensions of their own ability to comprehend spiritual things, and in their contempt of what they do not so as folly, 1 Cor. i. 18, 23. And with respect hereunto doth the apostle give that advice unto us as our duty, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool,

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that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18. This is a matter wherein men are very apt to deceive themselves, even to conceit themselves wise, and to trust thereunto in the things of God; whereof alone he there treats. Whereas, therefore, the especial promise of God is, to teach the *meek* and the *humble*, there is nothing that sets men at a greater distance from divine instruction than a proud conceit of their own wisdom, wit, parts, and abilities. Wherefore, this wisdom, which is the daughter of natural darkness and the mother of proud spiritual ignorance, the Spirit of wisdom freeth the minds of believers from, in the way that shall be afterward declared; and therein is he unto us a "Spirit of wisdom." Moreover, he gives us that "wisdom which is from above," which we are directed to "ask of God," James i. 5. Without this wisdom, which he works in us, no man can understand the wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel; whoso is thus made wise shall understand these things, and none else. There is, therefore, a *gift of spiritual wisdom* and understanding necessary hereunto, that we may discern the "wonderful things" that are in the word of God. To whom this is not given, they know not the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Let men please or pride themselves whilst they will in their own wisdom and learning, and explode the consideration of these things in our inquiries after the mind of God, the meanest believer who hath received this wisdom from above, according unto the measure of the gift of Christ, knoweth more of the mind of God in a due manner than they do.

When our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed that he came into the world "that they which see not might see," or to communicate spiritual, saving light unto the minds of men, the Pharisees, who had great apprehensions of their own *wisdom* and understanding in the law, replied with scorn, "Are we blind also?" John ix. 39, 40. It proved no otherwise, and that to their eternal ruin. Yet do I not judge all them to be *practically* blind who do not *doctrinally* own the receiving of this wisdom and light from above; for although we make not ourselves to differ from others, nor have any thing in a way of spiritual ability but what we have received, yet are some apt to *glory* as if they had not received, as the apostle intimates, 1 Cor. iv. 7. Wherefore, the Holy Spirit, as given unto us, is said to be a "Spirit of wisdom," because he *maketh us wise*, or worketh wisdom in us. This wisdom we have not of ourselves; for to suppose it, renders the word of God of none effect. And this spiritual wisdom, thus to be bestowed upon us, thus to be wrought in us, is necessary, that we may know the mysteries of the gospel, or understand the mind of God therein; which is all that we plead for.

I have insisted the longer upon this testimony, because the whole of what we assert in general, in the nature, causes, and effects of it,

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is fully declared therein. And this was the way whereby they of old came to understand divine revelations, or the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. If others, who seem to scorn all mention of the *teaching of the Holy Ghost*, have found out a course more expedite unto the same end, it is what I understand not nor do desire to participate in.

CHAPTER III.

Other testimonies pleaded in confirmation of the same truth—John xvi. 13 opened—How far all true believers are infallibly led into all truth declared, and the manner how they are so—1 John ii. 20, 27, explained—What assurance of the truth they have who are taught of God—Eph. iv. 14; Job xxxvi. 22, John vi. 45—Practical truths inferred from the assertion proved.

THERE are yet other testimonies which may be pleaded unto the same purpose; for unto this end is the Holy Ghost promised unto all believers: John xvi. 13, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth."

The Holy Spirit is called "The Spirit of truth" principally on the same account as God absolutely is called "The God of truth;" he is so *essentially*. He is the first, absolute, divine, eternal verity. So he is originally called "The Holy Spirit" on the account of his *essential* holiness. But it is not on that account solely that he is here called "The Spirit of truth." He is so as he is the *revealer* of all divine, supernatural truth unto the church, as he is also called "The Holy Spirit," as he is author of all holiness in others; therefore is he here promised unto the church, as it is his work to *lead us into all truth*.

And two things are considerable in this promise:—1. What is intended by *all truth;* 2. How the Holy Spirit *guides* or *leads* us into it:—

1. With respect unto the *object*,—(1.) It is not *all truth absolutely* that is intended. There is truth in things natural and civil, and stories of things that are past; nothing of this nature is comprised in this promise. We see believers of all sorts as ignorant of, as unacquainted with, many of these things as any other sort of men whatever; yet doth not one word of the promise of Christ fall unto the ground. Wherefore, *all that truth*, or all truth of that nature, whereof our Saviour there speaketh is alone intended. The mysteries of the gospel, of the kingdom of heaven, the counsel of God about the salvation of the church by Christ, and concerning their faith and obedience, are the truth which he is promised to guide us into. This the apostle calleth "All the counsel of God," Acts xx. 27,—namely, which respects all the ends of our faith and obedience, verse 21.

(2.) It admits of a *limitation* with respect unto the diversity of

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subjects, or the persons unto whom this truth is to be communicated. They are not all of them, as to the *degrees* of light and knowledge, *equally* to be led into all truth. Every one unto whom he is thus promised shall be so far led into the knowledge of it as is necessary unto his own estate and condition, his duty and his work; for "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph. iv. 7. It is Christ alone who, in the free gift of all grace, *assigns the measures* wherein every one shall be made partaker of it. In his sovereign will he hath allotted the measures of grace, light, and knowledge unto all the members of the church; and there is no less difference in *these measures* than in the knowledge of the most glorious apostle and that of the meanest believer in the world. The duty, work, and obedience of every one, is the *rule of the measure* of his receiving these gifts of Christ. None shall want any thing that is necessary unto him; none shall receive any thing that he is not to use and improve in a way of duty.

2. Our second inquiry is, how the Spirit doth thus *lead us* into all truth. The external revelation of truth is herein supposed. This he is promised to instruct us in the knowledge of in a spiritual manner; whereby I understand no more but so as it is required of us in a way of duty. To clear the truth hereof some things must be observed; as,—

(1.) The promises concerning the *mission of the Holy Spirit* in these chapters of the Gospel [by John], xiv. xv. xvi., are not to be confined unto the *apostles*, nor unto the *first age or ages of the church*. To do so is expressly contradictory unto the discourse and whole design of our Lord Jesus Christ unto that purpose; for he promiseth him in opposition unto his own temporary abode in the world, namely, that this of the Spirit should *be for ever*, chap. xiv 16,—that is, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, Matt. xxviii. 20, unto the *consummation* of the whole state of the church here below. And to suppose the contrary is to overthrow the foundation of all truth and comfort in the church: for their preservation in the one, and the administration of the other unto them, depend on the accomplishment of this promise alone; and so also do all the benefits of the intercession of Christ, which are no otherwise communicated unto us but by the *Holy Spirit*, as given in pursuit of this promise; for what herein he prayed for his apostles, he prayed for all them that should believe in him through their word unto the end of the world, John xvii. 20.

(2.) It is granted that sundry things in the promises of the Holy Ghost were peculiar unto the apostles, and had their accomplishment on the day of Pentecost, when he descended on them in that glorious, visible manner, Acts ii. 1–4; for as they were commanded by our Saviour *to wait for this his coming* before they engaged in the

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discharge of that office whereunto he had called them, Acts i. 4, so now they were fully empowered and enabled unto all that belonged thereunto. But their peculiar interest in these promises respected only things that were peculiar unto their office; such that mentioned in this place is not.

(3.) It is not an *external guidance* into the truth by the objective revelation of it that is intended, for such revelations are not granted unto all believers unto whom this promise is made, nor are they to look for them; and the revelation of truth, in the ministerial proposal of it, is common unto all the world unto whom the word is preached, and so is not the subject of an especial promise.

(4.) Wherefore, it is the *internal teaching* of the Holy Ghost, giving an understanding of the mind of God, of all sacred truths as revealed, that is intended: for,—[1.] It is the same with that other promise, "They shall be all taught of God;" for we are thus taught of God by the Spirit's leading us into all truth, and no otherwise. [2.] This the word enforceth. "The Spirit of truth ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς, shall lead and guide you in the right way to the knowledge of the truth." So when Philip asked the eunuch whether he understood the things which he read out of the prophet Isaiah, he replied, "How can I, ἐὰν μή τις ὁδηγήσῃ με, 'unless one lead me' to the sense of it?"—that is, "by his interpretation give me an understanding of it," Acts viii. 31. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, by giving us that understanding of it which of ourselves we are not able to attain. And other interpretations the words will not admit. It is, therefore, his work to give us a useful, saving understanding of all sacred truth, or the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. All spiritual, *divine, supernatural truth* is revealed in the Scripture. Herein all are agreed. The knowledge, the *right understanding*, of this truth as so revealed, is the duty of all, according unto the means which they enjoy and the duties that are required of them. Neither can this be denied. Unto this end, that they may do so, the Holy Spirit is here *promised unto them that do believe.* His divine aid and assistance is, therefore, necessary hereunto. And this we are to *pray for*, as it is promised. Wherefore, of ourselves, without his especial assistance and guidance, we cannot attain a due knowledge of and understanding in the truth revealed in the Scripture. As unto the especial nature of this assistance, it shall be spoken unto afterward.

This is again affirmed concerning all believers, 1 John ii. 20, 27, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in it."

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1. That by the *unction* and *anointing* in this place, the Spirit of God and his work, with respect unto the end mentioned, are intended, is not questioned by any that are conversant about these things with sobriety. And it is plain in the text; for,—(1.) That the Holy Spirit in his especial operations is called an *unction*, or is said to *anoint* us, is evident in many places of the Scripture: see Heb. i. 9; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. Neither is a spiritual unction ascribed unto any thing else in the whole Scripture. (2.) That expression, "Which ye have from the Holy One" (Acts iii. 14, Rev. iii. 7), that is, *Jesus Christ*, doth expressly answer unto the promise of Christ to send his Holy Spirit unto us, and that for the end here mentioned,—namely, to teach us, and lead us into all truth; whence he is called "The Spirit of the Lord," or "of Christ," 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18; Rom. viii. 9; Phil. i. 19, etc. (3.) That, also, of his "abiding in us" is nothing but an expression of the same promise of Christ that he shall "abide with us for ever," John xiv. 16. (4.) The work here assigned unto this unction is expressly assigned unto the Holy Spirit: John xvi. 13, "The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth." (5.) What is said of it,—namely, not only that *it is true, and not false*, but that it is "*truth, and is no lie*," —doth plainly intimate his *essential* verity. And I cannot but wonder that any persons should, against this open and plain evidence, ascribe the things here mentioned unto any thing else, and not exclusively unto the Holy Ghost; for so do some contend (Episcop. in loc. after Socin. on the same place), that by this unction the *doctrine of the gospel only* is intended. It is true that the doctrine of the gospel, in the preaching of it, is the means or instrumental cause of this teaching by the Holy Ghost; and on that account what is spoken of the teaching of the Spirit of God may be spoken, in its place, of the doctrine of the gospel, because he teacheth us thereby. But here it is spoken of *objectively*, as what we are to be taught, and not *efficiently*, as what it is that teacheth us. And to say, as they do, "It is the instruction which we have by the gospel that is intended," is to assert the *effect* only, and to exclude the cause; for that signifies no more but the effect of the unction here ascribed unto believers, as that which they had received from the Holy One. Didymus, an ancient learned writer, interpreteth this *unction* to be the *illuminating* grace of the Spirit, and the *Holy One* to be the *Spirit himself*, lib. ii. de Spir. Sanc. But the other interpretation is more proper and consonant unto the use of the Scripture. The expression is taken from the institution of God under the Old Testament whereby kings and priests were *anointed* with oil, to signify the gifts of the Spirit communicated unto them for the discharge of their office; and thence believers, who are real partakers of the internal *unction* in the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, are said to be "made kings and priests

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unto God." It is, therefore, the work of the Holy Spirit that is here described. He alone, and his gifts, graces, and privileges that ensue thereon, are so expressed, here or anywhere else in the whole Scripture.

2. Two things are to be observed in what is here ascribed unto this unction:—(1.) What is the *effect* of his work in believers; (2.) What is the *nature* of it, or how he produceth that effect.

(1.) For the first, there is a double expression of it:—[1.] That they "know all things;" [2.] That they "need not that any should teach them;"—both which expressions admit of, yea require, their limitations.

[1.] The "all things" intended come under a double restriction,—the first taken from the *nature* of the things themselves, the other from the *scope* and circumstances of the place; or, the one from the general end, the other from the special design proposed.

1*st.* The *general end* proposed is, our abiding in Christ: "Ye shall abide in him;" which the apostle expresseth, 1 John ii. 24, by "continuing in the Son, and in the Father." Wherefore, the *all things* here mentioned are all things necessary unto our ingrafting into and continuance in Christ. Such are all the fundamental, yea, important truths of the gospel. Whatever is needful unto our communion with Christ and our obedience to him, this all true believers are taught. However they may mistake in things of *lesser moment*, and be ignorant in the doctrine of some truths, or have but mean degrees of knowledge in any thing, yet shall they all know the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, in all those things and truths which are necessary that they may believe unto righteousness and make confession unto salvation.

2*dly.* The *especial end* under consideration is, preservation and deliverance from the antichrists and seducers of those days, with the errors, lies, and false doctrines which they divulged concerning Christ and the gospel. The only way and means whereby we may be so preserved from the poisons and infections of such pernicious opinions and ways is, the assured knowledge of the truths of the gospel as they are revealed in the Scripture. All those truths which were any way needful to secure their faith and preserve them from *mortal* seductions, they were taught and did know. And where any man knows the truths which are required unto his implantation into Christ, and his continuance with him in faith and obedience, as also all those which may preserve him from the danger of seduction into pernicious errors, however he may fail and be mistaken in some things of less importance, yet is he secured as unto his present acceptable obedience and future blessedness. And to speak of it by the way, this giveth us the *rule of our especial communion and*

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love. Where any are *taught* these things, where they have the knowledge and make confession of that truth, or those articles of faith, whereby they may "abide in Christ," and are preserved *from pernicious seductions,* although they may differ from us and the truth in some things of less moment, we are obliged not only to forbearance of them, but *communion* with them; for who shall refuse them whom Christ hath received? or doth Christ refuse any to whom he gives his Spirit, who have the *unction* from the Holy One? This, and no other, is the rule of our *evangelical love* and communion among ourselves. Whatever we require more of any as a necessary condition of our Christian society, in point of doctrine, is an unwarrantable *imposition* on their consciences or practice, or both.

[2.] It is said that they so know these things as that they "need not that any should teach them:" which also requireth a limitation or exposition; for,—

1*st.* It is only the things as before declared that respect is had unto. Now, besides these, there are many other things which believers stand in need to be taught continually, and whose knowledge belongs unto their *edification.* Many things are very *useful* unto us that are not absolutely *necessary.* In natural things, and such as belong unto this present life, men would be very unwilling to be without or part with sundry things, without which yet life might be preserved; because they value them, as of use unto themselves, so enabling them to be useful unto others. And they who understand the nature, use, and benefit, of *evangelical truths* will not be contented that their knowledge in them should be confined only unto those which are of *absolute necessity* unto the being of spiritual life: yea, they cannot be well supposed to know those truths themselves who pretend such a satisfaction in them as to look no farther; for all who are sincere in faith and knowledge do aim at that "perfect man in Christ," which all the ordinances of God are designed to bring us unto, Col. i. 28. Wherefore, notwithstanding the knowledge of these things, there is still use and need of farther ministerial teaching in the church.

2*dly.* It is spoken of the things themselves *absolutely,* and not with respect unto the *degrees* of the knowledge of them. They did so know them as that there was no need that any man should teach them unto them, as unto their *initial knowledge* and substance of the things themselves; and so it may be said of all believers. But yet there are *degrees of knowledge* with respect unto those very things, which they may and ought to be carried on unto, as the apostle speaketh, Heb. vi. 1; and therefore doth the holy apostle himself who writes these things *farther instruct* them in them. And herein consists the principal part of the ministry of the church, even to carry

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on believers unto perfection in those things wherein, for the substance of them, they have been already instructed.

3*dly*. That which is principally intended is, that they need not that any should teach them, so as that they should depend on the light and *authority* of their instruction. Others may be helpers of their joy, but none can be lords of their faith. "Ye need no such teaching, because of the *unction* which ye have received."

(2.) For the general nature of the work here ascribed unto this *unction*,—that is, the Holy Spirit,—it is *teaching:* "The unction teacheth you." There are but two ways whereby the Spirit teacheth us, nor can any other be conceived. The one is by *objective*, the other by *subjective* revelations; for he teacheth us as a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation." The first way of his teaching is by immediate inspiration, communicating new sacred truths from God immediately unto the minds of men. So he taught the *prophets* and *apostles*, and all the penmen of the Scripture. By him the word of the Lord came unto them; and they spake as they were *acted* by him, 1 Pet. i. 11, 12; 2 Pet. i. 21. This is not the way of teaching here intended, for the end of this teaching of the Holy Ghost is only to make men teachers of others, which is not here intended; nor doth the apostle discourse unto any such purpose, as though God would grant *new revelations* unto men to preserve them from errors and seductions, which he hath made sufficient provision for in the word, Isa. viii. 20; 2 Pet. i. 19. By this word were they to try all doctrines and pretended revelations, yea, those which were so really before they received them, 1 John iv. 1. Besides, what is here affirmed is ascribed unto all sorts of believers, under the distribution which they are cast into by the apostle,—namely, of "old men," "young men," and "babes," which had not all of them received the Spirit of immediate revelation.

His other way of teaching is that which we have insisted on,—namely, his enabling us to discern, know, and understand the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture, or as declared in any divine revelation. This alone is or can be here intended. Wherefore, this is the design of the apostle in these words: *All divine truths necessary to be known and to be believed, that we may live unto God in faith and obedience, or come unto and abide in Christ, as also be preserved from seducers, are contained in the Scripture, or proposed unto us in divine revelations. These of ourselves we cannot understand unto the ends mentioned; for if we could, there would be no need that we should be taught them by the Holy Spirit: but this is so; he teacheth us all these things, enabling us to discern, comprehend, and acknowledge them.* And this is the whole of what we plead for.

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For a close of our considerations on these words of the apostle, I shall only observe what assurance a man that is thus taught the truth may have that it is the truth which he is taught, and that he is not deceived in his apprehensions of it; for hereon depends the use of this instruction, especially in times of trial,—indeed, at all times and on all occasions. It is not enough that we know the truth, but we must be assured that so we do: see Eph. iv. 14; Col. ii. 2. And there was never a greater *artifice* in the world than that whereby the *Roman church* hath imposed an impregnable, obstinate credulity on all that adhere thereunto; for it doth first fix this in their minds that itself *cannot err*, and therefore whatever is by her authority proposed unto them is infallibly true. Hence it comes to pass that they will abide obstinate against all convictions and the highest evidence of truth in all particular instances, whilst this principle is firmly fixed in their minds, that the church which proposeth these things unto them *cannot err* nor be mistaken; yea, whilst this persuasion abides with them, they may be, and indeed accordingly are, obliged to believe contradictions, things most irrational and absurd, inconsistent with Christian piety and the peace of human society. However, they say well in this, that it is necessary that a man should have *good assurance* of the truth which he doth profess, or of his own understanding of it and conception about it. This the apostle calleth "The riches of the full assurance of understanding," Col. ii. 2; whereof we shall speak afterward.

Wherefore, whereas the assurance of mind in other teachings depends much on the *authority* of them by whom they are taught, on a supposition that believers are taught the mind of God in the Scripture by the Holy Spirit, or are by him enabled to discern and know it, the inquiry is, how or by what means they have an *assurance* that they have a *right understanding* of the things which they are so taught, so as to abide in them and the profession of them against all opposition whatever, and so as to venture the eternal condition of their souls on *that assurance* they have of the truth; which every one must do whether he will or no. And this in the text is referred unto the author of this teaching: "The anointing is truth, and is no lie;" it is true, and infallibly so. There is no fear of, no possibility for, any man being deceived in what he is taught by this *unction*. And an assurance hereof ariseth in our minds partly from the *manner* of his teachings, and partly from the *evidence* of the things themselves that we are taught. The manner and way of his teaching us in and by the Scripture evidenceth unto us that what we are taught "is truth, and is no lie." He giveth a *secret witness* unto what he teacheth in his teachings; for "it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth," 1 John v. 6. And with respect unto

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the evidence which is so given us of the truth, it is said that the "unction" whereby we are taught "is truth, and is no lie;" that is, it is impossible any one should be deceived who is so taught. This will more fully appear when we have declared the whole of his work herein; something only may now be spoken, on occasion of this testimony.

There is a peculiar power accompanying the teaching of God by his Spirit: "Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?" Job xxxvi. 22. So our Saviour expoundeth that promise, "They shall be all taught of God." "Every man therefore that hath heard," saith he, "and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 45. There is such an efficacy accompanying God's teaching, that whosoever is so taught doth certainly believe the things that he is taught, as having the evidence of the truth of them in himself.

When the Holy Ghost gave *new revelations* of old unto the prophets and penmen of the Scripture by *immediate inspiration*, he did therein and therewith communicate unto them an infallible evidence that they were from God; and when he doth *illuminate our minds* in the knowledge of what is revealed, he doth therein himself bear witness unto, and assure us of, the truth which we do understand. Hereby do we come to that which the apostle calleth "The full assurance of understanding, in the acknowledgment of the mystery of God." He not only enableth our minds to apprehend the truth, but he shines into our hearts, the seat of spiritual experience, to "give us the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And the assurance which believers have thereby is above that which any other evidence or demonstration whatever can give; and the meanest believer hath from this teaching a greater rest, satisfaction, and assurance in the knowledge of the mind of God, than any that can be attained by the most raised notions or profound disputations: for "he that believeth hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. And why should others think it strange that there should be such evidence of truth in the teaching of the Spirit, by the illumination of our minds in the knowledge of the Scripture, as to give us an assurance of the highest nature, seeing there is "none that teacheth like him?"

Want hereof is that which makes men to fluctuate in their conceptions of spiritual things, and so ready on every occasion to part with what they have received. The church of *Rome* hath, as we observed, rather *craftily* than *wisely*, provided against any inconvenience herein. The doctrines which it teacheth are many of them false, and so the things contained in them can give no evidence unto themselves in the minds of men; for there is nothing but *imagination* in error,—there is nothing of substance in it. And their

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way of teaching is not accompanied with any especial advantage; yea, it is the most vain that ever was in the world. They would have men suppose that they may advance at once in the true belief of a *hundred things* whereof they have no evidence, merely resting on the infallibility of the church, by which, they say, they are *proposed*. Wherefore, they teach men that although they receive no evidencing light in this way of their instruction, nor have any experience of the power or efficacy of truth in what they are taught, yet they may rest assuredly in the *infallibility of the church*. Hence the assurance they have of any thing they suppose truth is not an act of the mind in the embracing of the truth from any evidence that it gives of itself, but a presumption in general that the *church is infallible* by which these things are proposed unto them. The design is, to prevail with men to suppose that they believe *all things*, when, indeed, they believe *nothing*,—that they understand the mind and will of God, when, indeed, they understand nothing at all of them; for a man believes nothing but what is accompanied with an evidence whereon it ought to be believed. But this they pretend not unto, at least not such that should give them that assurance of the truth of it which is requisite; and therefore are all men by them referred for that unto the *infallibility* of the church. Persons weak, ignorant, credulous, or superstitious, either for interest or by the craft of seducers, may be prevailed on to make their resort unto this relief. Those who will not forego the rational conduct of their own souls, and leave themselves unto the guidance of others, knowing that it is they alone who must give an account of themselves to God, will not easily be induced thereunto.

Others will resolve all into their own *rational conceptions* of things, without any respect unto a superior infallible teacher; and the minds of many, influenced by this notion, *that they have themselves alone to trust unto*, are come unto the utmost uncertainty and instability in all things of religion. Nor can it otherwise be: for as the mind of man is in itself indifferent and undetermined unto any thing, as true or false (unless it be in its first notions of the common principles of reason) beyond the evidence that is proposed unto it; so also is it *various, unsteady*, and apt to fluctuate from one thing to another. And there are but two ways whereby it may be naturally ascertained and determined in its conceptions and assent. The first is by the use of the *external senses*, which will not deceive it. However, it cannot but receive, believe, and comply with what it comprehends by its *senses;* as what it sees, hears, and feels. The other is by *reason*, whereby it deduceth certain conclusions from propositions of necessary truth,—that is, by *demonstration*. But by neither of these ways can the mind be brought unto a stability and

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assurance in or about things spiritual or supernatural; for they are neither the objects of *natural* sense nor capable of a *scientifical* demonstration. Wherefore, a man can have nothing but a probability or conjectural knowledge concerning them, unless he have some certain, *infallible teaching* wherein he can acquiesce. And such is that of this "unction," which "is truth, and is no lie." In and by his teaching of us,—namely, the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture,—there is such evidence of truth communicated unto our minds and hearts as giveth us an immovable assurance of them, or the "full assurance of understanding;" for God therein "shines in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ."

Again, there is an evidence in the things themselves, unto *spiritual sense and judgment*, Phil. i. 9; Heb. v. 14. This is that which gives the mind the highest assurance of the truth of what it doth believe that it is capable of in this world; for when it *finds in itself* the power and efficacy of the truth wherein it is instructed, that it worketh, effecteth, and implanteth the things themselves upon it, giving and ascertaining unto it all the benefits and comforts which they promise or express, and is thereby united unto the soul, or hath a real, permanent, efficacious subsistence in it,—then, I say, hath the mind the utmost assurance in the truth of it which it doth or can desire in the things of this nature. But this belongs not unto our present design.

The testimonies pleaded are sufficient for the confirmation of our first general assertion,—namely, *That it is the Holy Spirit who teacheth us to understand aright the mind and will of God in the Scripture; without whose aid and assistance we can never do so usefully nor profitably unto our own souls.* Sundry others that speak unto the same purpose will be afterward on various occasions insisted on.

I might add unto these testimonies the faith and profession of the church in all ages,—they all believed and professed that the Scriptures could not be understood and interpreted without his assistance and inspiration by whom they were indited,—but it is not necessary so to do; for those who profess to *trust* unto their own reason and understanding only, cannot be so ignorant as not to know that they have no countenance given unto their persuasion in *antiquity*, unless it were by the *Pelagians*. But whereas there is no profitable handling of sacred truths on any pretence but with an eye unto the guidance of Christian practice,—and when that is manifest, it gives a great confirmation in our minds unto the truth itself,—I shall, before I proceed unto the consideration of the *especial ways* of the *teaching of the Holy Spirit* in this matter, and the *especial duties* required of us in compliance with them, that they

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may be effectual, divert a little unto some such considerations of that nature as derive from this general assertion.

It is the great promise of the New Testament that all believers shall be διδακτοὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "taught of God;" which our Saviour himself pleads as the only ground of their believing, John vi. 45. And so the apostle tells the Thessalonians that they were Θεοδίδακτοι, "taught of God," 1 Thess. iv. 9. No man is αὐτοδίδακτος, "taught of himself," his own teacher and guide in sacred things; neither can any man have a worse master, if he trust thereunto alone. The diligent use of all outward means appointed of God unto this end, that through the knowledge of the Scripture we may be made wise unto salvation, we always suppose. Amongst them the *ministry of the church* hath the first and chiefest place, Eph. iv. 12–15: for they are with me of no account who think it not worth the utmost of their diligence to attain the knowledge of those "wonderful things" that are in the word; yea, I should greatly admire at their stupidity who will not give so much *credit unto the Scripture* testifying of itself, and the suffrage of all good men with it, that there are "wonderful things" contained in it, so far as to inquire with their utmost diligence whether it be so or no, but that I know the reasons and causes of it. But a *supreme teacher* there must be, on whose wisdom, power, and authority, we ought principally to depend, as unto this end of being taught of God. And hereunto the use of our own reason, the utmost improvement of the rational abilities of our minds, is required. Those who would take away the *use of our reason* in spiritual things would deal with us, as we said before, as the Philistines did with Samson,—first put out our eyes, and then make us grind in their mill. The Scripture we own as the only rule of our faith, as the only treasury of all sacred truths. The knowledge we aim at is, the "full assurance of understanding" in the mind and will of God, revealed therein. The sole inquiry is, whether this supreme teacher be the Spirit of God instructing us in and by the Scripture, or whether it be the authority of this or that, any or all of the churches in the world, which either are so or pretend to be so. Which of these will it be our wisdom to choose and adhere unto? That the Holy Spirit hath taken this work upon himself we have already proved, and shall afterward farther demonstrate. Some churches, especially that of *Rome*, assume this office unto themselves; but it is too well known to the most to be trusted herein, and a great prejudice there lieth in this cause against that church at first. The Holy Spirit leaves unto us, yea, requires of us, the *diligent* use of the Scripture and exercise of our own reason, in subserviency unto his teaching; but this church requires us to renounce them *both*, in compliance with

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herself. And can it stand in competition with him? He is infallible; the *unction* "is truth, and is no lie;" the Spirit is truth. This also, indeed, that *church pretends* unto, but with such an open affront unto all evidence of truth as the world never underwent from any of its people before. He is absolutely, infinitely, eternally *free from any design* but the glory of God [in] the present and eternal good of them that are instructed by him. It will be very difficult for those of *Rome* to pretend hereunto; yea, it is apparent that all the exercise of their *instructing authority* lieth in a subserviency unto their own interest. When I see that men by a pretence hereof have gotten unto themselves *wealth, power, principalities, dominions,* with great revenues, and do use them all unto their own advantage, and mostly to the satisfaction of their lusts, pleasures, pride, ambition, and the like inordinate affections, I confess I cannot be free to deliver up blindfold the conduct of my soul unto them. He is full of *divine love* and care of the souls of them whom he doth instruct; is it so with them, or can any creature participate in his love and care? He is infinitely wise, and "knoweth all things, yea, the deep things of God," and can make known what he pleaseth of them unto us; as the apostle discourseth, 1 Cor. ii. They who preside in that church are ignorant themselves, as all men are, and the less they know it the more ignorant they are: yea, for the most part, as unto *sacred things,* they are comparatively so with respect unto other ordinary men; as a late *pope,* when some of their divines waited for an infallible determination of a *theological controversy* among them, confessed that *he had not studied those things, nor had the knowledge of them been his profession!*

But yet, notwithstanding these and several other differences between these *teachers,* it is marvellous to consider how many betake themselves unto the *latter of them,* and how few unto the *former;* and the reason is, because of the different *methods* they take in teaching, and the different *qualifications* they require in them that are to be taught: for as unto them whom the Spirit of God undertaketh to instruct, he requireth that they be *meek* and *humble;* that they give themselves unto *continual prayer, meditation,* and study in the word *day and night;* above all, that they endeavour a conformity in their whole souls and lives unto the truths that he instructs them in. These are hard conditions unto *flesh and blood;* few there are who like them, and therefore few they are who apply themselves unto the *school of God.* We may be admitted *scholars* by the other *teacher* on far cheaper and easier rates. Men may be made "good *Catholics,*" as to faith and understanding, without the least cost in *self-denial,* or much trouble unto the flesh in any other duty. There is no qualification required for the admission of a man into the *Catho-*

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lic schools, and barely to be there is to be wise and knowing enough. Wherefore, although all advantages imaginable as unto the *teachers* lie on the one hand, yet the pretended easy way of learning casts the multitude on the other; for it requireth more wisdom than we have of ourselves to be at all that charge and pains in spiritual duty, and diligence in the use of all means for the right understanding of the mind of God, which is required in and of all them who will advantageously partake of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, when it is supposed we may have all the ends which we aim at thereby in an easy and naked assent unto the proposals of the church, without the least farther charge or trouble. But these are the measures of *slothful and carnal minds*, who prefer their ease, their lusts, and pleasures, before their souls. There is difficulty in all things that are excellent; neither can we partake of the excellency of any thing unless we will undertake its difficulty. But although the ways whereby we may come unto a participation of the teaching of the Holy Ghost seem at first rough and uneasy, yet unto all that engage in them they will be found to be "ways of pleasantness and paths of peace."

It may be said, "That it is evident in common experience that many men do attain a great knowledge and skill in the things revealed in the Scripture, without any of that internal teaching by the *illumination* of their minds which is pleaded for, especially if it be to be obtained by the means now intimated, and afterward more fully to be declared: for they themselves do renounce the necessity of any such teaching, and esteem all that is spoken of it a vain imagination; and not only so, but live, some of them, in an open defiance of all those qualifications and duties which are required unto a participation of these teachings. Yet it is foolish to pretend they are not skilled in the knowledge of *divinity*, seeing it is plain that they excel most other men therein; and therefore do sufficiently despise all them who pretend unto any benefit by the *supernatural illumination* contended for."

I answer briefly in this place, It is true there are, and ever were, some, yea many, who "profess that they know God, but in works deny him, being abominable and disobedient." The knowledge which such men may attain, and which they make profession of, belongs not unto our inquiry; and we may easily discern both what it is in itself, and wherein it differs from that true knowledge of God which it is our duty to have: for,—

1. There is in the Scripture, with respect unto the mind and will of God revealed therein, with the mysteries of truth and grace, mention of γνῶσις and ἐπίγνωσις,—"knowledge" and "acknowledgment." The former, if it be alone, affects only the *speculative part* of the

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mind with notions of truth; and it is of very little use, but subject unto the highest abuse: 1 Cor. viii. 1, Ἡ γνῶσις φυσιοῖ. It is that which *puffs up men* into all their proud contentions about religion, which the world is filled withal. The other gives the mind an experience of the power and efficacy of the truth known or discovered, so as to transform the soul and all its affections into it, and thereby to give a "full assurance of understanding" unto the mind itself, Phil. i. 9; Luke i. 4; Col. i. 6, 9, 10, ii. 2, iii. 10; Rom. x. 2; Eph. i. 17, iv. 13; 1 Tim. ii. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 25, iii. 7; Tit. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 2, 3, 8, ii. 20. It is not worth disputing at all what knowledge of the first kind, or what degree therein, men, any men, the worst of men, may attain by their industry and skill in other common arts and sciences; for what if they should make such a proficiency therein as to be filled with pride in themselves, and to confound others with their subtile disputations, will any real profit redound hence unto themselves, or the world, or the church of God? It doth not, therefore, deserve the least contention about it. But that *acknowledgment* of the truth which affects the heart, and conforms the soul unto the will of God revealed, is not attainable in any degree without the *saving illumination* of the Spirit of God.

2. Men may have a knowledge of *words*, and the *meaning* of propositions in the Scripture, who have no knowledge of the *things themselves* designed in them. The things revealed in the Scripture are expressed in propositions whose words and terms are intelligible unto the common reason of mankind. Every rational man, especially if he be skilled in those *common sciences and arts* which all writings refer unto, may, without any especial aid of the Holy Ghost, know the meaning of the *propositions* that are laid down in, or drawn from the Scripture; yea, they can do so who believe not one word of it to be true, and they do so, as well as the best of them, who have no *other help* in the understanding of the Scripture but their own reason, let them profess to believe what they will. And whatever men understand of the meaning of the words, *expressions*, and *propositions* in the Scripture, if they believe not the *things* which they declare, they do not in any sense *know the mind and will of God* in them; for to know a thing as the mind of God, and not to assent unto its truth, implieth a contradiction. I shall never grant that a man understands the Scripture aright who understands the words of it only, and not the things which is the mind of God in them. For instance, the *Jews* understand the words of the Scripture of the Old Testament in its own original language, and they are able to perceive the *grammatical sense* and construction of the propositions contained in it,—they are unacquainted with them and their writings who will not acknowledge their skill, subtilty, and

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accuracy in these things,—yet will not any Christian say they *understand the mind of God* in the Old Testament. The apostle showeth the contrary, and giveth the reason for it, in the place before insisted on, 2 Cor. iii. Such a knowledge of the Scripture no wise man will value, let it be attained how it will.

3. This knowledge that may be thus attained doth only *inform the mind* in the way of an *artificial science*, but doth not really *illuminate* it; and to this end men have turned *divinity* into an *art*, like other common human arts and sciences, and so they learn it, instead of a *spiritual wisdom and understanding of divine mysteries*. It is true that the knowledge of common learned arts and sciences is of great use unto the understanding of the Scriptures, as unto what they have in *common* with other writings, and what they refer unto that is of human cognizance; but to bring in all the terms, notions, and rules of those *arts and sciences into divinity*, and by the mixture of them with it to compose a *scheme* of divine knowledge, is all one as if a man should design to make up his *house* of the *scaffolds* which he only useth in the building of it. Such is that knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture which many aim at and content themselves withal; and it may be attained, as any other *art* or *science* may, without any supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit, and is sufficient to *drive a trade with;* which, as things are stated in the world, men may use and exercise unto their great advantage. But, as was said before, it is not that which we inquire after. That wisdom in the mystery of the gospel, that knowledge of the mind and will of God in the Scripture, which *affects the heart*, and *transforms the mind* in the renovation of it unto the approbation of the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God," as the apostle speaks, Rom. xii. 2, is alone valuable and desirable, as unto all spiritual and eternal ends.

4. It doth not give πάντα πλοῦτον τῆς πληροφορίας τῆς συνέσεως εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ,—"all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God," as the apostle speaks, Col. ii. 2. It gives unto men no other assurance of mind in the things that they know but what they have from acknowledged principles, and conclusions drawn from them, in any other science. But that knowledge which men have of the mysteries of the gospel by the teaching and illumination of the Holy Spirit gives them "the riches of assurance of understanding" of a higher nature, even the assurance of faith. That assurance, I say, which believers have in spiritual things is of another nature and kind than can be attained out of conclusions that are only rationally derived from the most evident principles; and therefore doth it produce effects of another nature, both in doing and in suffering: for this is that which

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effectually and infallibly puts them on all those duties and that obedience in self-denial and the mortification of sin which the world either knoweth not or despiseth; for "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure," 1 John iii. 3. And this also enables them cheerfully and joyfully to suffer all that the world can inflict on them for the profession of those truths whereof they have that assurance. But nothing of this ensues on that common knowledge which men may have from themselves of sacred things; for,—

5. It doth not enable men to *trust in God*, and adhere firmly unto him by love. The psalmist, speaking unto God, saith, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee," Ps. ix. 10. To "know the name of God," is to know the revelations that he hath made of himself, his mind and his will, in the Scripture. They that have this knowledge, he affirms, "will put their trust in him." Therefore, it is certain that those who *put not their trust in God* have not the knowledge of him. There is a γνῶσις ψευδώνυμος, a "knowledge falsely so called," which hath nothing of real spiritual knowledge but the name; and it is generally much given to disputing, or the maintaining of antitheses, or oppositions unto the truth, 1 Tim. vi. 20. But it is *falsely* called *knowledge*, inasmuch as those in whom it is do neither *trust* in God nor *adhere* unto him in love. And we shall not much inquire by what means such a knowledge may be acquired.

It remaineth, therefore, notwithstanding this objection, that all real useful knowledge of the "wonderful things" that are in the Scripture is an effect of God's *opening our eyes* by the illuminating grace of his Holy Spirit.

1. And this will enable us to "try the spirits," as we are commanded, of many amongst us; for some there are who at once have cast off a due respect unto their *rule* and *guide*, the Scripture and Holy Spirit of God. Some formerly have pretended unto such a guidance by the *Spirit* as that they have neglected or rejected the *written word;* and some pretend such an adherence unto the *word*, and such an ability in their own minds and reasons to understand it, as to despise the *teaching of the Spirit*. Others reject both the one and the other, betaking themselves unto another *rule* and *guide*, whereunto they ascribe all that belongs unto either or both of them; but a wandering *light* it hath proved unto them, that hath led them into a bog of many vain imaginations and corrupt opinions. And it is fallen out with them as might be expected; for although the Holy Spirit be promised to lead us into all truth, yet is he so in an especial manner as unto those which concern the person, offices, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ immediately, whose Spirit he is: see John xvi. 13–15; 1 John ii. 20, 27. Those, therefore, who renounce a dependence on him for instruction out of the word are either left

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unto palpable *ignorance* about these things, or unto *foolish, corrupt imaginations* concerning them. Hence some of them openly deny, some faintly grant, but evidently corrupt, the truth concerning the person of Christ; and unto his offices and grace they seem to have little regard. And what else can be expected from such, who despise the *teaching of that Spirit* of Christ who is promised to lead us into all truth concerning him? Nor will the loudest pretences of some unto *the Spirit* in this matter relieve them; for we inquire not after *every spirit* that any one who will may make his boast of, but of that Spirit alone which instructs us in and by the written word. Until such men will return unto the only rule and guide of Christians, until they will own it their duty to seek for the knowledge of truth from the Scripture alone, and in their so doing depend not on any thing in themselves, but on the saving instructions of the Spirit of God, it is in vain to contend with them; for they and we build on diverse foundations, and their faith and ours are resolved into diverse principles,—ours into the Scripture, theirs into a light of their own. There are, therefore, no common acknowledged *principles* between us whereon we may convince each other. And this is the cause that disputes with such persons are generally fruitless, especially as immixed with that intemperancy of reviling other men wherein they exceed; for if that be a way either of learning or teaching of the truth, it is what the Scripture hath not instructed us in. When the *veil* shall be taken from their eyes, and they turned unto the Lord, they will learn more modesty and humility. In the meantime, the issue between these men and us is this and no other: We persuade men to take the Scripture as the *only rule*, and the holy promised Spirit of God, sought by ardent prayers and supplications, in the use of all means appointed by Christ for that end, *for their guide*. They deal with men to turn into themselves, and to attend unto the light within them. Whilst we build on these most distant principles, the difference between us is irreconcilable, and will be eternal. Could we come to an agreement here, other things would fall away of themselves. If we shall *renounce the Scripture*, and the instruction given out of it unto the church by the Spirit of God, betaking ourselves unto *our own light*, we are sure it will teach us nothing but either what they profess, or other things altogether as corrupt. And if they, on the other hand, will forego their attendance to their pretended light, to hearken unto *the voice of God in the Scripture* only, and to beg sincerely the guidance of the Holy Spirit therein, they will learn from thence no other thing but what we profess. Until, therefore, they return unto "the law and testimony,"—without which, whatsoever is pretended, there is no *light* in any,—we have no more to do but, labouring to preserve

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the flock of Christ in the profession of the "faith once delivered unto the saints," to commit the difference between the *word and Spirit* on the one hand, and the *light within* on the other, unto the decision of Jesus Christ at the last day.

2. It is from no other root that the contempt of the mysteries of the gospel, and the preferring of other doctrines before them, is sprung up into so much bitter fruit among us. It is by the "*Spirit of wisdom and revelation*" alone that our minds are enlightened to "know what is the hope of God's calling, and what are the riches of his glorious grace." What is his work herein upon our minds, and what upon the word itself, shall be afterward declared. At present, from what hath been proved, it is sufficiently evident that without his especial gracious aid and assistance, no man can discern, like, or approve of the mysteries of the gospel. And is it any wonder if persons who avowedly deny most of his *blessed operations* should be either unacquainted with or dislike those *mysteries*, so as to prefer that which is more suited unto their natural understanding and reason above them? for why should men esteem of those things which they do not understand, at least as they ought, nor will make use of the means whereby they may be enabled so to do? Wherefore, if there be persons of such a pride and profaneness as to undertake an inquiry into the Scriptures, to know the mind of God in them, and teach it unto others, without prayers and supplications for the teaching, leading, guidance, and assistance of the Holy Spirit, or, which is worse, who condemn and despise all those things as *enthusiastical*, it may not be expected that they should ever understand or approve of the mysteries that are contained therein. Is it not hence that both teachers and hearers make so *slow a progress* in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel, or grow so little in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? How many are there amongst us who, for the time and outward means, are become as *babes*, and have need of *milk*, and not of strong meat! Whence is it that so many teachers do so little endeavour *to go on to perfection*, but content themselves to dwell on the rudiments or *first principles* of our profession? Is there not great studying, and little profiting? great teaching, and little learning? much hearing, and little thriving? Do we abide in prayer, and abound in prayer as we ought, for that Spirit who alone can lead us into all truth? for that unction which teaches us all things with assurance and experience? I fear here lieth our defect. However, this I shall say, that there is no duty which in this world we perform unto God that is more acceptable unto him than *fervent prayers* for a right understanding of his mind and will in his word; for hereon all the glory we give unto him, and the due performance of all our obedience, do depend.

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CHAPTER IV.

The especial work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds unto the understanding of the Scripture declared and vindicated—Objections proposed and answered—The nature of the work asserted—Ps. cxix. 18; Eph. i. 18; Luke xxiv. 45; 1 Pet. ii. 9; Col. i. 13; 1 John v. 20, opened and vindicated.

WE have, as I suppose, sufficiently confirmed our first general assertion, concerning *the necessity of an especial work of the Holy Ghost in the illumination of our minds, to make us understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture.*

That which we proceed unto is, to show the *especial nature* of his work herein; and I shall take occasion thereunto from the consideration of an objection that is laid against the whole of what we affirm, which was touched on before.

For it is said that there is no need of this endeavour. "All men do acknowledge that the aid of the Spirit of God is necessary unto the study and interpretation of the Scripture; and so it is unto all other undertakings that are good and lawful. And herein consists the blessing of God upon man's own diligence and endeavours. If this be that which is intended, namely, the blessing of God upon our endeavours in the use of means, it is granted; but if any thing else be designed, it is nothing but to take off all industry in the use of means, to reject all helps of reason and learning, which is in the end to reduce into perfect enthusiasms."

Ans. 1. Whether, by the assignation of his *own work* unto the Spirit of God, we take away or weaken the use of the *other means* for the right interpretation of the Scriptures, will be tried when we come unto the examination of those ways and means. At present I shall only say that we establish them; for by assigning unto them their proper place and use, we do manifest their worth and necessity. But those by whom they or any of them are advanced into the place and unto the *exclusion* of the operation of the Holy Spirit, do destroy them, or render them unacceptable unto God, and useless unto the souls of men. We shall, therefore, manifest that the *assignations* which we make in this matter unto the Holy Spirit do render all our use of proper means for the right *interpretation of the Scripture* in a way of duty indispensably necessary; and the principal reason, so far as I can understand, why some deny the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit herein is, because they like not those means whose necessary use doth arise from an admission thereof.

But thus it hath fallen out in other things. Those who have declared any thing either of the *doctrine* or of the *power* of the grace

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of the gospel have been traduced, as opposing the principles of morality and reason; whereas on their grounds alone their true value can be discovered and their proper use directed. So the apostle, preaching faith in Christ, with righteousness and justification thereby, was accused to have made void the law, whereas without his doctrine the law would have been void, or of no use to the souls of men. So he pleads, Rom. iii. 31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." So to this day, justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of our own obedience; the efficacy of divine grace in conversion, and the liberty of our own wills; the stability of God's promises, and our diligent use of means,—are supposed inconsistent. So it is here also: the necessity of the communication of spiritual light unto our minds to enable us to understand the Scriptures, and the exercise of our own reason in the use of external means, are looked on as irreconcilable. But, as the apostle saith, "Do we make void the law through faith? yea, we establish it;" though he did it not in that place, nor unto those ends that the Jews would have had and used it. So we may say, Do we, by asserting the righteousness of Christ, make void our own obedience; by the efficacy of grace, destroy the liberty of our wills; by the necessity of spiritual illumination, take away the use of reason? yea, we establish them. We do it not, it may be, in such a way or in such a manner as some would fancy, and which would render them all on our part really useless, but in a clear consistency with and proper subserviency unto the work of God's Spirit and grace.

2. That in particular which lieth before us is, to remove that pretence of some, *that we need no other assistance of the Spirit of God for the right understanding of the Scripture but only his blessing in general on our own endeavours.* To this end two things are to be inquired into:—(1.) What description is given of this *work* in the Scripture, and what are the effects of it in our minds in *general;* (2.) What is the *nature of it in particular.*

(1.) The work itself is variously expressed in the Scripture; and it is that which, whether we will or no, we must be determined by in things of this kind. And the variety of expression serves both unto the confirmation of its truth and illustration of its nature.

[1.] It is declared by *opening of our eyes,* Ps. cxix. 18; *the enlightening of the eyes of our understanding,* Eph. i. 18. This opening of our eyes consists in the communication of spiritual light unto our minds by the preaching of the word, as it is declared, Acts xxvi. 17, 18. And the expression, though in part *metaphorical,* is eminently instructive in the nature of this work; for suppose the nearest and best-disposed proposition of any object unto our bodily eyes,

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with an external light properly suited unto the discovery of it, yet if our *eyes be blind*, or are closed beyond our own power to *open* them, we cannot discern it aright. Wherefore, on a supposition of the proposal unto our minds of the divine truths of supernatural revelation, and that in ways and by means suited unto the conveyance of it unto them, which is done in the Scripture and by the ministry of the church, with other outward means, yet without this work of the Spirit of God, called the "opening of our eyes," we cannot discern it in a due manner. And if this be not intended in this expression, it is no way *instructive*, but rather suited to lead us into a misunderstanding of what is declared and of our own duty. So it is plainly expressed, Luke xxiv. 45, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." None, I suppose, will deny but that it is the work of the Spirit of God thus to *open our eyes*, or to *enlighten our understandings;* for this were to deny the express testimonies of the Scripture, and those frequently reiterated. But some say, he doth this by the *word* only, and the preaching of it. No other work of his, they affirm, is necessary hereunto, or to make us rightly to discern the mind of God in the Scripture, but that it be proposed unto us in a due manner, provided we purge our minds from prejudices and corrupt affections. And this is the work of the Spirit, in that he is the *author of the Scriptures*, which he makes use of for our illumination. And it is granted that the Scripture is the only external means of our illumination; but in these testimonies it is considered only as the object thereof. They express a work of the Spirit or grace of God *upon our minds*, with respect unto the Scripture as its object: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The law, or the Scripture, with the "wonderful things" contained therein, are the *things to be known*, to be discovered and understood; but the means enabling us thereunto is an *internal work* upon our minds themselves, which is plainly expressed in distinction from the *things to be known*. This is the sum of what we plead: There is an efficacious work of the Spirit of God opening our eyes, enlightening our understandings or minds, to understand the things contained in the Scripture, distinct from the objective proposition of them in the Scripture itself; which the testimonies urged do fully confirm.

[2.] It is expressed as a *translation out of darkness into light:* "He hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9; "delivered us from the power of darkness," Col. i. 13; whereby we who were "darkness become light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. That in these and the like testimonies, the removal of the inward darkness of our minds, by the communication of spiritual light unto them, and not merely the objective revelation of truth in the Scripture, is

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intended, I have proved at large elsewhere, and therefore shall not again insist thereon.

[3.] It is directly called *the giving of us an understanding:* "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true," 1 John v. 20. The object of our understanding, or that which we know, is "*him that is true.*" God himself, even the Father, is primarily intended in this expression, for in the following words there is mention of "his Son Jesus Christ," who is in like manner said to be "true," because of his unity in essence with the Father; and, therefore, it is added, "This is the true God." But we are to know, also, what concerns *our being* "*in him,*" and to know *him as he is* "*eternal life.*" And these things contain the substance of all evangelical revelations, which, one way or other, depend upon them, and are resolved into them, John xvii. 3. To know the *Father*, "the only true God," and the *Son* as "the true God" also, in the unity of the same essence; to know "that *eternal life* which was *with the Father*" as unto the eternal counsel and preparation of it, 1 John i. 2, and is *in the Son* for its actual communication unto us; and to know *our being in him* by a participation thereof,—the things we mentioned,—is to know the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture. Especially these things are intended, which are "foolishness" unto corrupted *reason*, and as such are rejected by it, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24, ii. 14.

And two things we are to inquire into with reference unto this knowledge:—1*st.* What we are to have to enable us unto it, and that is an *understanding.* 2*dly.* How we come by it: *It is given us by the Son of God.*

1*st.* That which we have is διάνοια. This word in all other places of the New Testament doth constantly denote the essential faculty of our souls, which we call *understanding*, Matt. xxii. 37; Mark xii. 30; Luke x. 27; Eph. i. 18, ii. 3, iv. 18; Col. i. 21; Heb. viii. 10; 1 Pet. i. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 1. And it seems in the Scripture to be distinguished from the *mind*, by respect unto *actual exercise* only. The mind in its exercise is our understanding. But it cannot be the natural and essential faculty of our souls that is here intended; for although our natures are corrupted by sin, and not repaired but by Jesus Christ, yet doth not that corruption nor reparation denote the *destroying* or new *creation* of this being, or the nature of those faculties, which continue the same in both estates. Wherefore, the understanding here mentioned is no more *but a power and ability of mind with respect unto what is proposed unto us*, to receive and apprehend it in a due manner. We are not able of ourselves to know him that is true, and the eternal life that is in him, but he hath enabled us thereunto; for this *understanding* is *given* us unto that

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end, that we may so know him. Wherefore, whatever is proposed unto us in the gospel, or in any divine revelation, concerning these things, we cannot *know them*, at least as we ought, unless we have the *understanding* here mentioned given unto us, for so alone do we come by it.

2*dly*. It is *given* us. That a real and *effectual communication* unto us of the thing said to be *given* is intended in this word, of giving from God, is evident from every place in the Scripture where it is used. Some contend that God is said to *give things* unto us when *he doth what lies in him* that we may enjoy them, though we are never made partakers of them. But the assignation of this way and manner of *God's doing what lieth in him*, where the effect designed doth not ensue, not strictly restrained unto outward means, is scandalous, and fit to be exploded out of Christian *theology*. God says, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?" Isa. v. 4. But the expression hath plainly a double limitation:—(1*st*.) Unto the *use of outward means* only, concerning which God speaks in that place, and from which he elsewhere plainly distinguisheth his *giving them a new heart* and a *new spirit*, that they shall all know him and be all taught of him. (2*dly*.) Unto the *use of those outward means* that were *then established*, as the only way for the season; for even in respect unto them, he did more *for his vineyard* when he granted the gospel unto it. But is it possible that any man should think or believe that God cannot really *collate grace* and mercy on the souls of men when he pleaseth? Is it not as easy with him, on our restoration by Christ, to implant *habits of grace* in our souls, as it was at first to create us in *original rectitude* and righteousness? Wherefore, although we may inquire what God *doth*, and *hath done*, in this matter, according as he hath revealed it in his word, yet to say that he doth in any thing *what lieth in him* though the things which he affirms himself to do be not effected, is defective both in truth and piety. When he saith he hath done such a thing, or will do so, for us to say, "No, he hath not done so, or he will not do so; but he hath done, or will do, what lies in him that it may be so, though it never be so, nor have so been," is to make him altogether like ourselves. But on this ground some pretend that *the Son of God is said to have given men understanding*, because he hath done what is *requisite on his part*, in the declaration of the gospel, that we may have it, whether ever we have it or no. But,—(1*st*.) What he is said to *have done*, he had at least a design to do; and if he had so, why doth it not take effect? "It is," they say, "because of the *unwillingness of men to turn unto him*, and other *vicious habits* of their minds, which hinder them from receiving instruction." But if it be so, then,—[1*st*.] It is supposed that men also in their

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teachings can *give us an understanding* as well as the Son of God; for they may teach men the knowledge of the gospel if they are *willing to learn*, and have no darling lusts or *vicious habits* of mind to hinder them from learning. [2*dly.*] Seeing he hath taken this work on himself, and designs its accomplishment, cannot the *Son of God by his grace* remove those *vicious habits* of the minds of men, that they may have an understanding of these things? If he *cannot*, why doth he take that on him which he cannot effect? If he *will not*, why doth he promise to do that which can never be done without doing what he will not do? and why is he said to do (as he is, according to this interpretation of the words) that which he hath not done, which he will not or cannot do? (2*dly.*) The *giving of an understanding* is in this place plainly distinguished from the *proposition of the things to be understood;* this consists in the doctrine of the gospel, that in an ability to comprehend and know it. (3*dly.*) Again, the words here used, of *giving understanding*, may, indeed, express the actings or operations of men towards others, when an external proposal of things to be understood, with the due use of means, is intended; but yet if under their *teaching* men do not *learn* or comprehend the things wherein they are instructed by them, they cannot properly be said to have *given them an understanding of them*, with respect unto their moral operation unto that end, but only to have *endeavoured* so to do. But when this phrase of speech is used to express *a divine* operation, which questionless may be really *physical*, and so absolutely efficacious, to interpret it concerning an *endeavour* that may or may not succeed is not suitable unto those thoughts that become us concerning divine operations. Nor was there any reason why the apostle should *emphatically* assign this work unto "the Son of God," and that as he is "the true God and eternal life," if no more be intended but a work of the same nature and kind with what a man might do. And if this be the sense of the words, it is from *ourselves*, and not from the *Son of God*, that there is any truth in them, as unto the event: for *he might do*, it seems, *what lies in him to give an understanding*, and yet no one man in the world ever have an understanding of the nature designed; for if it may be so with any unto whom he is said to give an understanding, as it is professedly with the most, it may be so with *all*. Not farther to debate these things at present, whereas so excellent a grace and mercy towards the souls of men is here expressly attributed unto the Son of God, as the author of it,—namely, that *he gives us an understanding that we may know him which is true*, —I cannot think that they interpret the Scripture unto his glory whose exposition of this place consists in nothing but endeavours to prove that indeed he doth not so do.

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[4.] It is expressed by *teaching, leading,* and *guiding into the truth,* John vi. 45, xvi. 13; 1 John ii. 20, 27;—the places have been opened before. And two things are supposed in this expression of *teaching:*—1*st. A mind capable of instruction, leading, and conduct.* The nature must be *rational,* and comprehensive of the means of instruction, which can be so *taught.* Wherefore, we do not only grant herein the use of the rational faculties of the soul, but require their *exercise* and utmost improvement. If God *teach,* we are to *learn,* and we cannot learn but in the exercise of our minds. And it is in vain pretended that God's communication of a supernatural ability unto our minds, and our exercise of them in a way of duty, are *inconsistent,* whereas indeed they are *inseparable* in all that we are taught of God; for at the same time that he *infuseth a gracious ability* into our minds, he proposeth the truth unto us whereon that ability is to be exercised. And if these things are inconsistent, the whole real efficacy of God in the souls of men must be denied; which is to despoil him of his sovereignty. But we speak now of natural ability to receive instruction, to be taught, with the exercise of it in learning; for these are supposed in the expression of the communication of a spiritual ability by *teaching.* 2*dly.* A *teaching* suited unto that ability is promised or asserted. Three ways of this teaching are pleaded:—(1*st.*) That it consists in a Θεοπνευστία, *an immediate infallible inspiration and afflatus,* of the same nature with that of the prophets and apostles of old. But, [1*st.*] This takes away the distinction between the *extraordinary* and *ordinary* gifts of the Spirit, so fully asserted in the Scripture, as we shall elsewhere declare; and if it were so, God did not place in the church "some prophets," seeing all were so, and were always to be so. [2*dly.*] It brings in a neglect of the Scripture, and a levelling it unto the same state and condition with the conceptions of every one that will pretend unto this *inspiration.* [3*dly.*] The pretence visibly confutes itself in the manifold mutual contradictions of them that pretend unto it; and would, [4*thly.*] thereon be a principle, first of confusion, then of infidelity, and so lead unto atheism. [5*thly.*] The *prophets* themselves had not the knowledge and understanding of the mind and will of God which we inquire after by their *immediate inspirations,* which were unto them as the written word unto us, but had it by the same means as we have, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. Hence they so frequently and fervently *prayed for understanding,* as we have seen in the instance of David. Wherefore, (2*dly.*) Some say this *teaching* consists only in the outward preaching of the word, in the ministry of the church, and other external means of its application unto our minds. But there is not one of the testimonies insisted on wherein this promised *teaching of*

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God is not distinguished from the proposition of the word in the outward dispensation of it, as hath been proved. Besides, every one that enjoys this teaching, that is, who is taught of God, doth really believe and come to Christ thereby: John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me," saith our blessed Saviour. But it is not thus with all, nor ever was, towards whom the most powerful and cogent means of outward instruction have been or are used. Wherefore, (*3dly.*) This teaching is an *internal work of the Spirit*, giving light, wisdom, understanding, unto our minds; [and] so is spoken of and promised in an especial manner, distinct from the outward work of the dispensation of the word, and all the efficacy of it singly considered. One testimony will serve to this purpose, which hath been pleaded and vindicated already. It is by an *unction* that we are thus *taught*, 1 John ii. 20, 27. But the unction consists in a real communication of supernatural gifts and graces, whereof *supernatural light* is that which is peculiarly necessary unto this end. The communication of them all in all fulness unto Jesus Christ, the head of the church, was his *unction*, Heb. i. 9; Isa. lxi. 1. Wherefore, in the real participation of them in our measure doth our unction, whereby we are taught, consist.

It is granted that this teaching is such as *regards our own industry*, in the use of means appointed unto this end, that we may know the mind of God in the Scripture; but yet it is such as includes an *inward effectual operation* of the Holy Spirit, concomitant with the outward means of teaching and learning. When the eunuch read the prophecy of Isaiah, he affirmed he *could not understand it* unless some one did *guide* him. Hereon Philip opened the Scripture unto him. But it was the Holy Ghost that opened his heart, that he might understand it; for so he did the heart of Lydia, without which she would not have understood the preaching of Paul, Acts xvi. 14. Wherefore, in our learning, under the conduct or teaching of the Spirit, the utmost diligence in the exercise of our own minds is required of us; and where men are defective herein, they are said to be νωθροὶ ταῖς ἀκοαῖς, Heb. v. 11, "dull in hearing," or slow in the improvement of the instruction given them. And it is a senseless thing to imagine that men should be diverted from the exercise of the faculties of their minds merely because they are enabled to use them unto good purpose or successfully, which is the effect of this internal teaching.

[5.] It is expressed *by shining into our hearts:* "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of

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Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Jesus Christ is the "image of the invisible God, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" and that because of the illustrious representation of all divine excellencies that is made both in his person and his mediation. The person of the Father is the eternal fountain of infinitely divine glorious perfections; and they are all communicated unto the Son by eternal generation. In his person *absolutely*, as the Son of God, they are all of them *essentially;* in his person as God-man, as vested with his offices, they are *substantially*, in opposition unto all types and shadows; and in the glass of the gospel they are *accidentally*, by revelation,—*really*, but not *substantially*, for Christ himself is the body, the substance of all. As the *image of God*, so is he represented unto us in the glass of the gospel; and therein are we called to behold the glory of God in him, 2 Cor. iii. 18. The meaning is, that the truth and doctrine concerning Jesus Christ, his person and mediation, is so delivered and taught in the gospel as that the glory of God is eminently represented thereby; or therein is revealed what we are to know of God, his mind and his will, as he is declared by and in Jesus Christ. But why is it, then, that all do not thus behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" unto whom the gospel is preached? or whence is it that all unto whom the gospel is preached or declared do not apprehend and understand the truth, and reality, and glory, of the things revealed or proposed? —that is, why do they not understand the mind and will of God as revealed in the gospel? The apostle assigneth two reasons hereof: 1*st.* From what *hindereth it in many;* 2*dly.* From what is *necessary unto any* that so they may do:—

1*st.* The first is the *efficacy of the temptations and suggestions of Satan*, whereby their minds are filled with prejudices against the gospel and the doctrine of it. Being blinded hereby, they can see nothing of beauty and glory in it, and so certainly do not apprehend it aright: 2 Cor. iv. 4, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This is acknowledged by all to be an obstacle against the right understanding of the gospel. Unless the mind be freed from such *prejudices* as are the effects of such *blinding efficacy* of the suggestions of Satan, men cannot attain unto the true knowledge of the mind of God therein. How these prejudices are removed we shall show afterward. But if the mind be free, or freed from them, then it is supposed by some that there is need of no more but the due exercise of its faculties with diligence for that end, nor is any thing else required thereunto. It is true, in the ordinary dispensation of divine grace, this is required of us; but the apostle adds,—

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2*dly.* That there must, moreover, be a *divine light shining into our hearts,* to enable us hereunto;—at least, he doth so that this was granted unto them who *then did believe;* and if we have it not as well as they, I fear we do not believe in the same manner as they did. Wherefore, although there be in the gospel and the doctrine of it an illustrious representation of the glory of God in Christ, yet are we not able of ourselves to discern it, until the Holy Spirit by an act of his almighty power do *irradiate* our minds, and implant a light in them suited thereunto. He that doth not behold "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" in the gospel doth not understand the mind and will of God as revealed therein in a due manner. I suppose this will be granted, seeing both these things are but one and the same, diversely expressed. But this of ourselves we cannot do; for there is an internal work of God upon our minds necessary thereunto. This also is expressed in the words. It is his shining into our hearts, to give the light of this knowledge unto us. There is a light in the gospel, "the light of the glorious gospel of Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 4; but there must be a *light also in our hearts,* or we cannot discern it. And this is no natural light, or a light that is common unto all; but it is a light that, in a way of grace, is given unto them that do believe. And it is wrought in us by the same kind of efficiency as God *created light* with at the beginning of the world, —namely, by a productive act of power. It is evident, therefore, that the *light in our hearts* which God communicates unto us, that we may have the true knowledge of his mind and will in the gospel, is distinct from that *light of truth* which is in the gospel itself. The one is *subjective,* the other is *objective* only; the one is wrought in us, the other is proposed unto us; the one is an act of divine power in us, the other an act of divine grace and mercy towards us.

Other ways there are whereby this operation of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds is expressed. The instances given and testimonies considered are sufficient unto our purpose. That which we are in the proof of is, that there is more required unto a useful apprehension and understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture than the mere *objective proposal* of it unto us, and our diligent use of outward means to come to the knowledge of it; which yet, as we shall show, is from the Holy Spirit also. And as the denial hereof doth, by just consequence, make void the *principal means* whereby we may come unto such an understanding,—namely, frequent and fervent prayers for the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit,—so no tolerable account can be given of the mind of God and the meaning of the Scripture in the places insisted on. And certainly if we cannot understand the way and manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit herein, it were much better to *captivate our*

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understanding unto the obedience of faith than to wrest and pervert the Scripture, or debase the spiritual sense of it unto a compliance with our conceptions and apprehensions. But as we have herein the suffrage of them that do believe, in their own experience, who both value and acknowledge this grace and privilege unto the glory of God; so we have multiplied instances of such as, being destitute of that skill which should enable them to make use of sundry external means, which are in their proper place of great advantage, who yet, by virtue of this *divine teaching*, are wise in the things of God beyond what some others with all their skill can attain unto.

(2.) Moreover, the *effect* of this work of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men doth evidence of what *nature* it is. And this, also, is variously expressed; as,—

[1.] It is called *light:* "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," Eph. v. 8. The introduction of light into the mind is the proper effect of illumination. Men in their natural estate are said to be *darkness*, the *abstract* for the *concrete*, to express how deeply the mind is affected with it; for, as our Saviour saith, "If the light that is in thee be darkness" (as it is in them who are "darkness"), "how great is that darkness!" Matt. vi. 23. And because men are subject to mistake herein, and to suppose themselves, with the Pharisees, to see when they are blind, he gives that caution, "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness," Luke xi. 35; for men are very apt to please themselves with the working and improvement of their natural light, which yet, in the issue, with respect unto spiritual things, will prove but darkness. And while they are under the power of this darkness,—that is, while their minds are deeply affected with their natural ignorance,—they *cannot perceive spiritual things*, 1 Cor. ii. 14, no, not when they are most evidently proposed unto them; for although "the light shineth in darkness," or casteth out its beams in the evidence and glory of spiritual truth, yet "the darkness comprehendeth it not," John i. 5. But by this work of the Holy Spirit we are made "light in the Lord." Light in the mind is a spiritual ability to discern and know spiritual things, as is declared, 2 Cor. iv. 6. This is bestowed upon us and communicated unto us by the Holy Spirit. There is a real difference between light and darkness; and it is our minds that are affected with them, Luke xi. 35. The removal of the one and the introduction of the other are things not absolutely in our own power; he who is "darkness" cannot make himself "light in the Lord." Whatever he may do in way of disposition or preparation, in way of duty and diligence, in the utmost improvement of the natural faculties of his mind (which no man will ever rise unto who is under the power

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of this darkness, because of the insuperable prejudices and corrupt affections that it fills the mind withal), yet the *introduction of this light* is an act of Him who openeth the eyes of our understandings and shines into our hearts. Without this *light* no man can understand the Scripture as he ought; and I shall not contend about what they see or behold who are in darkness.

The expulsion of *spiritual darkness* out of our minds, and the introduction of *spiritual light* into them,—a work so great that they who were "darkness," whose "light was darkness," are made "light in the Lord" thereby,—is an effect of the immediate power of the Spirit of God. To ascribe other low and *metaphorical* senses unto the words is to corrupt the Scripture and to deny the testimony of God; for this *light* he produceth in us by the same power and the same manner of operation whereby he brought light out of darkness at the creation of all things. But by this way and means it is that we attain the "knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ," or the revelation of his mind and will in the gospel.

[2.] It is called *understanding*. So the psalmist prays, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law," Ps. cxix. 34. So the apostle speaks to Timothy, "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things," 2 Tim. ii. 7. Besides his own *consideration* of what was proposed unto him, which includes the due and diligent use of all outward means, it was moreover necessary that *God should give him understanding* by an inward effectual work of his Spirit, that he might comprehend the things wherein he was instructed. And the desire hereof, as of that without which there can be no saving knowledge of the word, nor advantage by it, the psalmist expresseth *emphatically* with great fervency of spirit: Ps. cxix. 144, "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live." Without this he knew that he could have no benefit by the everlasting righteousness of the testimonies of God. All understanding, indeed, however it be abused by the most, is the work and effect of the Holy Ghost; for "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding," Job xxxii. 8. So is this spiritual understanding in an especial manner. And in this "understanding" both the ability of our minds and the due exercise of it is included. And this one consideration, that the saints of God have with so much earnestness prayed that God would *give them understanding in his mind and will* as revealed in the word, with his reiterated promises that he would so do, is of more weight with me than all the disputes of men to the contrary. And there is no farther argument necessary to prove that men do not understand the mind of God in the Scripture in a due manner, than their supposal and confidence that so they can do without the communication of a *spiri-*

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tual understanding unto them by the Holy Spirit of God, which is so contrary unto the plain, express testimonies thereof.

[3.] It is called *wisdom;* for by this work on the minds of men they are rendered "*wise* unto salvation." So the apostle prays for the Colossians, "that God would fill them with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," chap. i. 9. These things may be the same, and the latter *exegetical* of the former. If there be a difference, "wisdom" respects things in general, in their whole *system* and *complex;* "understanding" respects particulars as they are to be reduced unto practice. Wherefore, the "spiritual understanding" which the apostle prays for respects the mind of God in especial or particular places of the Scripture; and "wisdom" is a skill and ability in the comprehension of the whole system of his counsel as revealed therein. He who is thus *made wise*, and he alone, can *understand* the things of God as he ought, Dan. xii. 10; Hos. xiv. 9; Ps. cvii. 43. Although men may bear themselves high on their learning, their natural abilities, their fruitful inventions, tenacious memories, various fancies, plausibility of expression, with long study and endeavours, things good and praise-worthy in their kind and order; yet unless they are thus *made wise* by the Spirit of God, they will scarce attain a due acquaintance with his mind and will;—for this effect of that work is also expressly called "knowledge," Col. i. 9; 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. i. 17; Col. iii. 10. Wherefore, without it we cannot have that which is properly so called.

This is the second thing designed in this discourse. In the first it was proved in general that there is an *effectual operation of the Spirit of God on the minds of men*, enabling them to perceive and understand the supernatural revelations of the Scripture when proposed unto them; and in the second is declared what is the *nature of that work*, and what are the effects of it on our minds. Both of them have I treated merely from Scripture testimony; for in vain shall we seek to any other way or means for what we ought to apprehend and believe herein. Neither is the force of these testimonies to be eluded by any distinctions or *evasions* whatever. Nor, whilst the authority of the Scripture is allowed, can any men more effectually evidence the weakness and depravation of their *reason* than by contending that in the exercise of it they can understand the mind and will of God as revealed therein, without the especial aid and illumination of the Spirit of God; nor can any man on that supposition, with any wisdom or consistency in his own principles, make use in a way of duty of the principal means whereby we may so understand them, as will afterward more fully appear.

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CHAPTER V.

Causes of the ignorance of the mind of God revealed in the Scripture, and of errors about it—What they are, and how they are removed.

THE supposition we proceed upon in this discourse is, that *God hath revealed his mind and will unto us, as unto all things concerning his worship, with our faith and obedience therein, in the holy Scripture.* Thereon do we inquire by what means we may attain the *saving knowledge* of the mind of God so revealed; and my principal design is, to show what *aid and assistance* we receive of the Holy Ghost unto that end. To further us in the knowledge hereof, I shall inquire into the *causes and reasons of that ignorance* and those misapprehensions of the mind of God as revealed which are amongst men, and how our minds are delivered from them.

It may be this part of our discourse might have had a more proper place assigned unto it, after we have given the truth pleaded a more full confirmation; but whereas an objection may arise from the consideration of what we shall now insist on against the truth contended for, I thought it not amiss so to obviate it as therewithal farther to illustrate the doctrine itself which we labour in.

All men see, and most men complain of, that ignorance of the mind of God, and those abominable errors, attended with false worship, which abound in the world. How few are there who understand and believe the truth aright! What *divisions,* what *scandals,* what *animosities,* what *violence,* mutual rage, and persecutions, do ensue hereon, among them that are called Christians, is likewise known. Hence some take occasion to countenance themselves in an open declension unto *atheism;* some, unto a great *indifferency* in all religion; some, to advance themselves and destroy others by the advantage of their opinions, according as they are prevalent in some times and places. A brief inquiry into the causes of that *darkness* and *ignorance* which is in the world amongst men outwardly owning the doctrine of the gospel, and especially of the *errors* and *heresies* which do abound above what they have done in most ages, may be of use to preserve us from those evils. A subject this is that would require much time and diligence unto the handling of it in a due manner; I intend only at present to point at the *heads of some few things,* the observation whereof may be of use unto the end designed.

Those of the Roman church tell us that the cause hereof is, the *obscurity, difficulty, and perplexity of the Scripture.* "If men will trust thereunto as their only guide, they are sure to miscarry." Wherefore, the only relief in this matter is, that we give up our souls unto the *conduct of their church,* which neither can err nor deceive. So,

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indeed, said Adam of old, when he was charged with his sin and infidelity: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." But whereas it is an evil, yea, the greatest of evils, whose causes we inquire after, it seems in general more rational that we should seek for them in *ourselves* than in any thing that God hath done; for he alone is good, and we are evil.

It is granted that God hath given us his word, or the holy Scripture, as a declaration of his mind and will; and, therefore, he hath given it unto us for this very end and purpose, that we may know them and do them. But whereas many men do fail herein, and do not understand aright what is revealed, but fall into pernicious errors and mistakes, unto his dishonour and their own ruin, is it meet to say unto God that this comes to pass from hence, because the revelation he hath made of these things is *dark, obscure, and intricate?* or, "The Scripture which thou hast given us doth deceive us?" Would a due reverence or deferency unto the wisdom, goodness, and love of God unto mankind be preserved therein?

"Audax omnia perpeti
Gens humana ruit per vetitum nefas."[1]

What will not the prejudices and corrupt interests of men carry them out unto! God will for ever preserve those that are his in an abhorrency of that religion, be it what it will, that by any means leads unto an undervaluation of that revelation of himself which, in infinite wisdom and goodness, he hath made unto us.

But is it because there is *no reason* to be given of this evil from the minds of men themselves that it is thus ascribed unto God? May not as well all the wickednesses that the world is filled withal be ascribed unto him and what he hath done? Doth not each one see a *sufficient cause* hereof even in himself, if he were not delivered from it by the power of the Spirit and grace of God? Do not other men who fail in the right knowledge of God, especially in any important truth, sufficiently evidence in other things that the root of this matter is in themselves? Alas! how dark are the minds of poor mortals, how full of pride and folly! I shall say with some confidence, he who understands not that there is reason enough to charge all the errors, ignorance, and confusions in religion, that are or ever were in the world, without the least censure of obscurity, insufficiency, or intricacy in the Scripture, *on the minds of men*, and those depraved affections whose prevalency they are obnoxious unto, are themselves profoundly ignorant of the state of all things above and here below.

We must, therefore, inquire after the causes and reasons of these things among ourselves; for there only they will be found.

And these causes are of two sorts: 1. *That which is general*, and

[1] Horat. Od. lib. i. 3, 25.

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the spring of all others; 2. *Those which are particular*, that arise and branch themselves from thence:—

1. The first and general cause of all ignorance, error, and misunderstanding of the mind and will of God, as revealed in the Scripture, among all sorts of men, whatever their particular circumstances are, is the *natural vanity and darkness with which the minds of all men are depraved.* The nature of this depravation of our minds by the fall, and the effects of it, I have fully elsewhere declared. Wherefore I now take it for granted that the minds of all men are naturally prepossessed with this darkness and vanity, from whence they are not, from whence they cannot be, delivered but by the saving illumination of the Spirit and grace of God. But because I have so largely treated of it both in the "Discourses of the Dispensation of the Spirit," book iii. chap. iii.,[1] as also in those concerning the Apostasy of these latter times,[2] I shall not again insist upon it.

Two things I shall only observe unto our present purpose, namely, —(1.) *That hereby the mind is kept off from discerning the glory and beauty of spiritual, heavenly truth*, and from being sensible of its power and efficacy, John i. 5. (2.) That it is by the same means *inclined unto all things that are vain, curious, superstitious, carnal*, suited unto the interest of pride, lust, and all manner of corrupt affections. Hence, whatever other occasions of error and superstition may be given or taken, the ground of their reception and of all adherence unto them is the *uncured vanity and darkness* of the minds of men by nature. This is the mire wherein this rush doth grow.

And the consideration hereof will rectify our thoughts concerning those whom we see daily to *wander from the truth*, or to live in those misapprehensions of the mind of God which they have imbibed, notwithstanding the clear revelation of it unto the contrary. Some think it strange that it should be so, and marvel at them; some are angry with them; and some would persecute and destroy them. We may make a better use of this consideration; for we may learn from it the *sad corruption and depravation of our minds in our estate of apostasy from God.* Here lies the seed and spring of all the sin, evil, and disorder, which we behold and suffer under in religious concerns in this world. And if we consider it aright, it will serve,—

[1.] To impress *a due sense of our own condition upon our minds*, that we may be humbled; and in *humility* alone there is safety. "His soul which is lifted up is not upright in him," Hab. ii. 4; for he *draws back from God*, and God hath no pleasure in him, as the apostle expounds those words, Heb. x. 38. It was in the principles of our nature to adhere sacredly unto the *first truth*, to discern and

[1] See vol. iii. of the author's works. [2] See vol. vii. of his works.

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abhor every false way. We were created with that *light of truth* in our minds as was every way able to guide us in all that we had to believe or do with respect unto God or our own blessedness for ever. But in the room thereof, through our wretched *apostasy from God*, our mind is become the seat and habitation of all vanity, disorder, and confusion. And no way doth this more discover itself than in the readiness and proneness of multitudes to embrace whatever is crooked, perverse, and false in religion, notwithstanding the *clear revelation* that God hath made of the whole truth concerning it in the Scripture. A due reflection hereon may teach us *humility* and self-abasement; for we are "by nature children of wrath, even as others," neither have we any good thing that we have not received. It is better, therefore, to be conversant with such thoughts on this occasion than to be filled with *contempt of*, or *wrath against* those whom we see yet suffering under those woful effects of the general *apostasy* from God, wherein we were equally involved with them. Yea,—

[2.] It will teach us *pity and compassion* towards those whose minds do run out into the spiritual excesses mentioned. The merciful High priest of the whole church hath "compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way," Heb. v. 2; and it is conformity unto him in all things which ought to be our principal design, if we desire to be like unto him in glory. Want hereof is the ruin of religion, and the true cause of all the troubles that its profession is encumbered withal at this day.

It is true, for the most part, there is an interposition of corrupt affections seducing the minds of men from the truth; with these are they tossed up and down, and so driven with the winds of temptations that befall them;—but is it *humanity* to stand on the shore, and seeing men in a *storm* at sea, wherein they are ready every moment to be cast away and perish, to *storm* at them ourselves, or to shoot them to death, or to cast fire into their vessel, because they are in danger of being drowned? Yet no otherwise do we deal with them whom we persecute because they miss the knowledge of the truth; and, it may be, raise a worse *storm* in ourselves as to our own *morals* than they suffer under in their *intellectuals*. Concerning such persons the advice of the apostle is, "Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," Jude 22, 23. Some are so given up in their apostasy as that they "sin unto death;" with such we are not to concern ourselves, 1 John v. 16. But it is very rare that we can safely make that judgment concerning any in this world. Sometimes, no doubt, we may, or this rule concerning them had never been given. As unto all others, the worst of them, those that *are in the fire*, the frame of our

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minds' acting towards them is here presented unto us; *compassion* of their present state, and *fear* of their future ruin, we ought to be possessed with and acted by. But how few are they who are so framed and minded towards them, especially to such as by their enormous errors seem to be fallen into the fire of God's displeasure! Anger, wrath, fury, contempt, towards such persons, men think to be their duty; more contrivances there are usually how they may be *temporally destroyed* than how they may be *eternally saved*. But such men profess the truth as it were by chance. They never knew what it is to learn it aright, nor whence the knowledge of it is to be received, nor were ever under its power or conduct. Our proper work is to *save such persons*, what lies in us, "pulling them out of the fire." Duties of difficulty and danger unto ourselves may be required hereunto. It is easier, if we had secular power with us, to thrust men into *temporal fire* for their errors than to free them from *eternal fire* by the truth. But if we were governed by compassion for their souls and fear of their ruin, as it is our duty to be, we would not decline any office of love required thereunto.

[3.] Hath God *led us into the truth*, hath he kept us from every false way?—it is evident that we have abundant cause of gratitude and fruitfulness. It is a condition more desperate than that of the most pernicious errors, to "hold the truth in unrighteousness;" and as good not know the Lord Jesus Christ as to be barren in the knowledge of him. It is not, we see, of *ourselves*, that we either know the truth, or love it, or abide in the profession of it. We have nothing of this kind but what we have received. *Humility* in ourselves, *usefulness* towards others, and *thankfulness* unto God, ought to be the effects of this consideration.

This is the first general cause of men's misapprehension of the mind and will of God as revealed in the Scripture. The revelation itself is plain, perspicuous, and full of light; but this "light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." The natural darkness and blindness which is in the minds of men, with the vanity and instability which they are attended with, causeth them to wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction. And for this sort of men to complain, as they do horribly in the *Papacy*, of the obscurity of the Scripture, is all one as if a company of blind men should cry out of an *eclipse of the sun* when he shineth in his full strength and glory. How this darkness is removed and taken away by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in our illumination, I have elsewhere at large discoursed.

2. *Corrupt affections* prevalent in the minds of men do hinder them from a right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture; for hereby are they effectually inclined to wrest and pervert

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the truth, or are filled with prejudices against it. This is the *next cause* of all ignorance and error, where we must seek for the particular causes of them before proposed. The principal reason why the generality of men attain not a right understanding of the mind and will of God in the Scripture is, the *corrupt affections* that are predominant in their own minds, whereby they are exposed unto all sorts of impressions and seductions from Satan and the agents for his kingdom and interest. So one apostle tells us that "unlearned and unstable men do wrest the Scripture, unto their own destruction," 2 Pet. iii. 16; and another, that these unlearned and unstable persons are "men of corrupt minds," 1 Tim. vi. 5; 2 Tim. iii. 8; —that is, such whose minds are peculiarly under the power of perverse and corrupt affections: for these affections are θελήματα τῶν διανοιῶν, Eph. ii. 3, "the wills of the mind," such as carry it with an impetuous inclination towards their own satisfaction, and such as render it obstinate and perverse in its adherence thereunto. These are the root of that "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" which must be cast out before we can "receive with meekness the ingrafted word," James i. 21. Some few of them may be named:—

(1.) *Pride, or carnal confidence* in our own wisdom and ability of mind for all the ends of our duty towards God, and this in especial of understanding his mind and will, either keeps the souls of men under the bondage of darkness and ignorance, or precipitates them into foolish apprehensions or pernicious errors. As spiritual pride is the worst sort of pride, so this is the worst degree of spiritual pride, namely, when men do not acknowledge God in these things as they ought, but lean unto their own understandings. This is that which ruined the Pharisees of old, that they could not understand the mind of God in any thing unto their advantage. It is the *meek*, the *humble*, the *lowly in mind*, those that are *like little children*, that God hath promised to teach. This is an eternal and unalterable law of God's appointment, that whoever will learn his mind and will as revealed in the Scripture must be *humble* and *lowly*, renouncing all trust and confidence in themselves. And whatever men of another frame do come to know, they know it not according to the mind of God, nor according to their own duty, nor unto their advantage. Whatever *knowledge* they may have, however *conspicuous* it may be made by their natural and *acquired abilities*, however it may be garnished with a mixture of secular literature, whatever contempt it may raise them unto of others, such as the Pharisees had of the *people*, whom they esteemed *accursed because they knew not the law*, yet they know nothing as they ought, nothing unto the glory of God, nothing to the spiritual advantage of their own souls. And wherein is their knowledge to be accounted of? Indeed, the knowledge of a

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proud man is the throne of Satan in his mind. To suppose that persons under the predominancy of pride, self-conceit, and self-confidence, can understand the mind of God as revealed in a due manner, is to renounce the Scriptures, or innumerable positive testimonies given in them unto the contrary. Such persons cannot make use of any one means of spiritual knowledge that God requires of them in a way of duty, nor improve any one truth which they may know unto their good. Therefore our Saviour tells the proud Pharisees, notwithstanding all their skill in the *letter* and *tittles* of the Scripture, that "they had not heard the voice of God at any time, nor seen his shape, neither had they his word abiding in them," John v. 37, 38. They had no right knowledge of him, as he had revealed and declared himself.

Men infected with this *leaven*, having their minds tainted with it, have been the great corrupters of divine truth in all ages. Such have been the ringleaders of all *heresies;* and such were they who have turned the knowledge of the will of God proposed in the Scripture into a *wrangling science*, filled with niceties, subtilties, curiosities, *futilous* [*vain*] *terms of art*, and other fuel for the minds of fiery contenders in wrangling disputations.

And this kind of *self-confidence* is apt to befall all sorts of men. Those of the meanest capacity may be infected with it no less than the wisest or most learned; and we frequently see persons whose weakness in all sound knowledge, and insufficiency for the use of proper means unto the attaining of it, might seem to call them unto humility and lowliness of mind in an eminent manner, yet lifted up unto such a degree of spiritual pride and conceit of their own understandings as to render them useless, troublesome, and offensive unto men of sober minds. But principally are they exposed hereunto who either really or in their own apprehensions are *exalted above others* in secular learning, and natural or acquired abilities; for such men are apt to think that they must needs know the meaning of the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures better than others, or, at least, that they can do so, if they will but set themselves about it. But that which principally hinders them from so doing is their conceit that so they do. They mistake that for divine knowledge which is in them the great obstruction of it.

(2.) The *love of honour and praise among men* is another corrupt affection of mind, of the same nature and efficacy with that before named. This is so branded by our Saviour as an insuperable obstacle against the admission of sacred light and truth that no more need be added thereunto. See John v. 44, xii. 43.

(3.) *A pertinacious adherence unto corrupt traditions and inveterate errors* quite shuts up the way unto all wisdom and spiritual

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understanding. This ruined the church of the *Jews* of old, and makes at present that of the Romanists incurable. What their forefathers have professed, what themselves have imbibed from their infancy, what all their outward circumstances are involved in, what they have advantage by, what is in reputation with those in whom they are principally concerned,—that shall be the *truth* with them, and nothing else. Unto persons whose minds are wholly vitiated with the leaven of this corrupt affection, there is not a line in the Scripture whose sense can be truly and clearly represented; all appears in the colour and figure that their prejudices frame in their minds. When the Lord Christ came forth first unto the preaching of the gospel, there came a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," Matt. iii. 17, xvii. 5. Neither was this command given unto them alone who heard it immediately from the "excellent glory," as Peter speaks, 2 Pet. i. 17, but, as recorded in the word, is given equally unto every one that would learn any thing of the mind and will of God in a due manner. No man can learn but by the "hearing of him;" unto him are we sent for the learning of our spiritual knowledge. And no other way doth he speak unto us but by his word and Spirit. But where the minds of men are prepossessed with apprehensions of what they have received from the authority of other teachers, they have neither desire, design, readiness, nor willingness to hear *him*. But if men will not forego all pre-imbibed opinions, prejudices, and conceptions of mind, however rivetted into them by traditions, custom, veneration of elders, and secular advantages, to hearken unto and receive whatever he shall speak unto them, and that with a humble, lowly frame of heart, they will never learn the truth, nor attain a "full assurance of understanding" in the mysteries of God. These inveterate prejudices are at this day those which principally shut out the truth, and set men together by the ears all the world over about religion and the concerns thereof. Hence is all the strife, rage, tumult, and persecution that the world is filled withal. Could men but once agree to lay down all those presumptions which either wit, or learning, or custom, or interest and advantage, have influenced them withal, at the feet of Jesus Christ, and resolve in sincerity to comply with that alone which he doth teach them, and to forego whatever is inconsistent therewith, the ways unto *truth and peace* would be more laid open than otherwise they are like to be.

(4.) *Spiritual sloth* is of the same nature, and produceth the same effect. The Scripture frequently giveth us in charge to use the utmost of our diligence in the *search* of and for the finding out of spiritual truth, proposing unto us the example of those that have done so before, Josh. i. 8; Ps. i. 2; Prov. ii. 2–6; John v. 39; 1 Pet.

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i. 10–12. And any rational man would judge that if it had not been so expressly given us in charge from God himself, if it had not been a means appointed and sanctified unto this end, yet that the *nature of the thing* itself, with its importance unto our duty and blessedness, are sufficient to convince us of its necessity. It is *truth*, it is *heavenly truth*, we inquire after; that on the knowledge or ignorance whereof our eternal blessedness or misery doth depend. And in a due perception thereof alone are the faculties of our minds perfected according to the measure which they are capable of in this life. Therein alone can the mind of man find rest, peace, and satisfaction; and without it must always wander in restless uncertainties and disquieting vanities. It is a notion implanted in the minds of all men that all *truth lies deep*, and that there is great difficulty in the attainment of it. The minds of most are imposed on by specious appearances of falsehood. Wherefore, all wise men have agreed that *without our utmost care and diligence* in the investigation of the truth, we must be contented to walk in the shades of ignorance and error. And if it be thus in earthly things, how much more is it so in heavenly! As spiritual, *supernatural truth* is incomparably to be valued above that which relates unto things natural, so it is more abstruse and of a more difficult investigation. But this *folly* is befallen the minds of the generality of men, that of all things they suppose there is least need of pains and diligence to be used in an inquiry after those things which *the angels themselves desire to bow down and look into*, and which *the prophets of old inquired and searched after with all diligence*. Whatever be their notion hereof, yet practically it is evident that most men, through *pride* and *sloth* and *love of sin*, are wholly negligent herein; at least, they will not apply themselves to those spiritual means without the use whereof the knowledge of *divine truth* will not be attained. It is generally supposed that men may be as wise in these things as they need to be at a very easy rate. The folly of men herein can never be enough bewailed; they regard spiritual truth as if they had no concernment in it beyond what custom and tradition put them on, in reading chapters or hearing sermons. They are wholly under the power of *sloth* as unto any means of spiritual knowledge.

Some, indeed, will labour diligently in the study of those things which the Scripture hath in common with other *arts and sciences;* such are the languages wherein it was writ, the stories contained in it, the ways of arguing which it useth with *scholastical accuracy* in expressing the truth supposed to be contained in it. These things are great in themselves, but go for nothing when they are alone. Men under the utmost efficacy of *spiritual sloth* may be diligent in them, and make a great progress in their improvement. But they

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are spiritual objects and duties that this sloth prevails to alienate the minds of men from, and make them negligent of; and what are those duties I shall afterward manifest.

The consideration, I say, of the state of things in the world gives so great an evidence of probability that,—what through the *pride and self-conceit* of the minds of many, refusing a compliance with the means of spiritual knowledge, and excluding all gracious qualifications indispensably required unto the attaining of it; what through *the power of corrupt traditions*, imprisoning the minds of men in a fatal adherence unto them, preventing all thoughts of a holy, ingenuous inquiry into the mind of God by the only safe, infallible revelation of it; what *through the power of spiritual sloth* indisposing the minds of the most unto an immediate search of the Scripture, partly with apprehensions of its difficulty, and notions of learning the truth contained in it by other means; and what through a *traditional course of studying divinity* as an art or science to be learned out of the writings of men,—the number is very small of them who diligently, humbly, and conscientiously endeavour to learn the truth from the voice of God in the Scripture, or to grow wise in the mysteries of the gospel by such ways as wherein alone that wisdom is attainable. And is it any wonder, then, if many, the greatest number of men, wander after vain imaginations of their own or others, whilst the truth is neglected or despised?

(5.) Again, there is in the minds of men by nature a *love of sin*, which causeth them to *hate the truth;* and none can understand it but those that love it. In the visible church, most men come to know of the truth of the gospel as it were whether they will or no; and the general design of it they find to be, a *separation between them and their sins*. This sets them at a distance from it in affection; whereon they can never make any near approach unto it in knowledge or understanding. So we are assured, John iii. 19, 20, "Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Persons under the power of this frame take up under the shades of ignorance and corrupt imaginations; and if they should attempt to learn the truth, they would never be able so to do.

Lastly, Satan by his temptations and suggestions doth variously affect the minds of men, hindering them from discerning the mind of God as revealed in the Scripture: "The god of this world blindeth the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 4. The ways and means whereby he doth so,—the instruments which he useth, the artifices and methods which he applieth unto

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his ends, with his application of himself unto them according unto all occasions, circumstances, opportunities, and provocations, in great variety,—were worth our inquiring into, but that we should too much digress from our present design.

I have but mentioned these things, and that as *instances* of the true original causes of the want of understanding and misunderstanding of the revelation of the mind of God in the Scripture. Many more of the same nature might be added unto them, and their effectual operations unto the same end declared; but the mention of them here is only *occasional*, and such as will not admit of a farther discussion. But by these and the like depraved affections it is that the *original darkness* and enmity of the minds of men against spiritual truth and all the mysteries of it do exert themselves; and from them do all the error, superstition, and false worship that the world is filled withal proceed: for,—

Whilst the minds of men are thus affected, as they cannot understand and receive divine, spiritual truths in a due manner, so are they ready and prone to embrace whatever is contrary thereunto. If, therefore, it be the work of the Spirit of God alone, in the renovation of our minds, to free them from the power of these *vicious, depraved habits*, and consequently the advantages that Satan hath against them thereby, there is an especial work of his necessary to enable us to learn the truth as we ought. And for those who have no regard unto these things,—who suppose that in the study of the Scripture all things come alike unto all, to the clean and to the unclean, to the humble and the proud, to them that hate the garment spotted with the flesh and those that both love sin and live in it,—they seem to know nothing either of the design, nature, power, use, or end of the gospel.

The removal of these hinderances and obstacles is the work of the Spirit of God alone; for,—

1. He alone communicates that *spiritual light* unto our minds which is the foundation of all our relief against these obstacles of and oppositions unto a saving understanding of the mind of God.

2. In particular, he freeth, delivereth, and purgeth our minds from all those *corrupt affections* and prejudices which are partly inbred in them, partly assumed by them or imposed on them; for the artifice of Satan, in turning the minds of men from the truth, is by bringing them under the power of corrupt and vicious habits, which expel that frame of spirit which is indispensably necessary unto them that would learn it. It is, indeed, our *duty* so to purify and purge ourselves. We ought to cast out "all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," that we may "receive with meekness the ingrafted word," James i. 21; to "purge ourselves from these things, that we

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may be vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for our Master's use, and prepared unto every good work," 2 Tim. ii. 21. If it be not thus with us, let the pride and folly of men pretend what they please, we can neither learn, nor know, nor teach the mind of God as we ought. And what men may do without giving glory unto God, or the bringing of any spiritual advantage unto their own souls, we inquire not, seeing it belongeth only *equivocally* unto Christian religion. But although it is our duty thus to *purge ourselves*, yet it is by *the grace of the Holy Spirit* that we do so. Those who, under a pretence of our own duty, would exclude in any thing the efficacious operations of the Holy Ghost, or, on the other hand, on the pretence of his grace and its efficacy, would exclude the necessity of diligence in our duties, do admit but of one half of the gospel, rejecting the other. The whole gospel asserts and requireth them both unto every good act and work. Wherefore, the purging of ourselves is that which is not absolutely in the power of our natural abilities; for these corrupt affections possess and are predominant in the mind itself, and all its actings are suited unto their nature and influenced by their power. It can never, therefore, by its own native ability free itself from them. But it is the work of this great purifier and sanctifier of the church to free our minds from these corrupt affections and inveterate prejudices, whereby we are alienated from the truth and inclined unto false conceptions of the mind of God; and unless this be done, in vain shall we think to learn the truth as it is in Jesus. See 1 Cor. vi. 11; Tit. iii. 3–5; Rom. viii. 13; Eph. iv. 20–24.

3. He implants in our minds *spiritual habits and principles*, contrary and opposite unto those corrupt affections, whereby they are subdued and expelled. By him are our minds made *humble, meek*, and *teachable*, through a submission unto the authority of the word, and a conscientious endeavour to conform ourselves thereunto.

It was always agreed that there were ordinarily preparations required unto the receiving of divine illuminations; and in the assignation of them many have been greatly deceived. Hence some, in the expectation of receiving *divine revelations*, have been imposed on by *diabolical delusions;* which by the working of their imaginations they had prepared their minds to give an easy admission unto. So was it among the heathen of old, who had invented many ways unto this purpose, some of them horrid and dreadful; and so it is still with *all enthusiasts*. But God himself hath plainly declared what are the *qualifications* of those souls which are meet to be made partakers of divine teachings, or ever shall be so; and these are, as they are frequently expressed, *meekness, humility, godly fear, reverence, submission of soul and conscience* unto the authority of God, with a *resolution* and readiness for and unto all that obedience which

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he requireth of us, especially that which is internal in the hidden man of the heart. It may be some will judge that we wander very far from the matter of our inquiry, namely, *How we may come unto the knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture*, or how we may aright understand the Scripture, when we assign these things as means thereof or preparations thereunto; for although these are good things (for that cannot be denied), yet "it is *ridiculous* to urge them as necessary unto this end, or as of any use for the attaining of it. Learning, arts, tongues, sciences, with the rules of their exercise, and the advantage of *ecclesiastical dignity*, are the things that are of use herein, and they alone." The most of these things, and sundry others of the same kind, we acknowledge to be of great use unto the end designed, in their proper place, and what is the due use of them shall be afterward declared; but we must not forego what the Scripture plainly instructeth us in, and which the nature of the things themselves doth evidence to be necessary, to comply with the arrogance and fancy of any, or to free ourselves from their contempt.

It is such an understanding of the Scripture, of the *divine revelation* of the mind of God therein, as wherein the spiritual illumination of our minds doth consist, which we inquire after; such a knowledge as is useful and profitable unto the proper ends of the Scripture towards us, that which we are taught of God, that we may live unto him. These are the ends of all true knowledge. See 2 Tim. iii. 14–17. And for this end the furnishment of the mind with the graces before mentioned is the best preparation. He bids defiance unto the gospel by whom it is denied. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Whatever be the parts or abilities of men, whatever diligence they may use in the investigation of the truth, whatever *disciplinary* knowledge they may attain thereby, the Spirit of God never did nor ever will instruct *a proud, unhumbled soul* in the right knowledge of the Scripture, as it is a divine revelation. It is these *gracious qualifications alone* whereby we may be enabled to "cast out all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," so as to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls."

Our blessed Saviour tells us, that "except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. We cannot do so unless we become *humble, meek, tender, weaned from high thoughts of ourselves*, and are purged from prejudices by corrupt affections; and I value not that knowledge which will not conduct us into the "kingdom of heaven," or which shall be thence excluded. So God hath promised that "the meek he will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his way. The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show

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them his covenant." "What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way," Ps. xxv. 9, 12, 14. And so we are told plainly that "evil men understand not judgment; but they that seek the LORD understand all things," Prov. xxviii. 5.

Now all these graces whereby men are made teachable, capable of divine mysteries, so as to learn the truth as it is in Jesus, to understand the mind of God in the Scriptures, are wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, and belong unto his work upon our minds in our illumination. Without this the hearts of all men are fat, their ears heavy, and their eyes sealed, that they can neither hear, nor perceive, nor understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

These things belong unto the work of the Holy Spirit upon our minds (as also sundry other instances might be given unto the same purpose) in our illumination, or his enabling of us rightly to understand the mind of God in the Scripture. But whereas whoever is thus by him *graciously prepared* and disposed shall be taught in the knowledge of the will of God, so far as he is concerned to know it in point of duty, if so be he abide in the ordinary use of outward means, so there are sundry other things necessary unto the attaining of farther useful degrees of this knowledge and understanding, whereof I shall treat afterward.

CHAPTER VI.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the composing and disposal of the Scripture as a means of sacred illumination—The perspicuity of the Scripture unto the understanding of the mind of God declared and vindicated.

THERE is yet another part of the work of the Holy Spirit with respect unto the *illumination* of our minds, which must also be inquired into, and this concerneth the *Scripture* itself; for this he hath so given out and so disposed of as that it should be a moral way or means for the communication of *divine revelations* unto the minds of men; for this also is an effect of his infinite wisdom and care of the church. Designing to enlighten our minds with the knowledge of God, he prepared apt instruments for that end. That, therefore, which we shall declare on this head of our discourse is, That *the Holy Spirit of God hath prepared and disposed of the Scripture so as it might be a most sufficient and absolutely perfect way and means of communicating unto our minds that saving knowledge of God and his will which is needful that we may live unto him, and come unto the enjoyment of him in his glory.* And here sundry things must be observed.

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FIRST, The Holy Spirit hath not in the Scripture reduced and *disposed its doctrines or supernatural truths into any system, order, or method.* Into such a method are the principal of them disposed in our *catechisms* and *systems of divinity, creeds,* and *confessions of faith;* for whereas the doctrinal truths of the Scripture have a mutual respect unto and dependence on one another, they may be disposed into such an order, to help the understandings and the memories of men. There is, indeed, in some of the epistles of Paul, especially that unto the Romans, a methodical disposition of the most important doctrines of the gospel, and from thence are the best methods of our teaching borrowed; but *in the whole Scripture* there is no such thing aimed at. It is not distributed into *common-places,* nor are all things concerning the same truth *methodically* disposed under the same head, but its contexture and frame are quite of another nature. From this consideration some think they have an advantage to charge the Scripture with *obscurity,* and do thereon maintain that it was never intended to be such a *revelation of doctrines* as should be the rule of our faith. "Had it been so, the truths to be believed would have been proposed in some order unto us, as a *creed* or *confession* of faith, that we might at once have had a view of them and been acquainted with them; but whereas they are now left to be gathered out of a *collection of histories, prophecies, prayers, songs, letters* or *epistles,* such as the Bible is composed of, they are difficult to be found, hard to be understood, and never perfectly to be learned." And, doubtless, the way fancied would have been excellent had God designed to effect in us only an *artificial* or *methodical faith* and obedience. But if we have a due regard unto the *use of the Scripture* and the ends of God therein, there is no weight in this objection; for,—

1. It is evident that the whole of it consists in the *advancement of men's own apprehensions* and imaginations against the will and wisdom of God. It is a sufficient reason to prove this the *absolutely best way* for the disposal of divine revelations, because God hath made use of this and no other. One, indeed, is reported to have said that had he been *present at the creation of the universe, he would have disposed some things into a better order than what they are in!* for "vain man would be wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt." And no *wiser* or better are the thoughts that the revelations of supernatural truths might have been *otherwise disposed of,* with respect unto the end of God, than as they are in the Scripture. God puts not such value upon men's *accurate methods* as they may imagine them to deserve, nor are they so subservient unto his ends in the revelation of himself as they are apt to fancy; yea, ofttimes when, as they suppose, they have brought truths unto the *strictest pro-*

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priety of expression, they lose both their power and their glory. Hence is the world filled with so many *lifeless, sapless, graceless,* artificial declarations of divine truth in the *schoolmen* and others. We may sooner squeeze water out of a pumice-stone than one drop of spiritual nourishment out of them. But how many millions of souls have received divine light and consolation, suited unto their condition, in those *occasional occurrences* of truth which they meet withal in the Scripture, which they would never have obtained in those wise, *artificial disposals of them* which some men would fancy! Truths have their power and efficacy upon our minds, not only from *themselves,* but from their *posture* in the Scripture. There are they placed in such *aspects* towards, in such *conjunctions* one with another, as that their *influences* on our minds do greatly depend thereon. He is no *wise man,* nor exercised in those things, who would part with any one truth out of its proper place where the Holy Spirit hath disposed and fixed it. The psalmist saith of God's testimonies they are אַנְשֵׁי עֲצָתִי, "the men of my counsel," Ps. cxix. 24; and no man will make choice of a *counsellor* all whose wisdom consists in *sayings* and *rules* cast into a certain *order* and *method.* He alone is a good *counsellor* who, out of the largeness and wisdom of his own heart and mind, can give advice according unto all present occasions and circumstances. Such counsellors are the testimonies of God. Artificial methodizing of spiritual truths may make men ready in notions, cunning and subtile in disputations; but it is the Scripture itself that is able to "make us wise unto salvation."

2. In the writing and composing of the holy Scripture, the Spirit of God had respect unto the *various states and conditions of the church.* It was not given for the use of one age or season only, but for all generations,—for a guide in faith and obedience from the beginning of the world to the end of it. And the state of the church was not always to be the same, neither in light, knowledge, nor worship. God had so disposed of things in the eternal counsel of his will that it should be carried on by various *degrees of divine revelation* unto its perfect estate. Hereunto is the revelation of his mind in the Scripture subservient and suited, Heb. i. 1. If all divine truths had from the first been stated and fixed in a *system of doctrines,* the state of the church must have been always the same; which was contrary unto the whole design of divine wisdom in those things.

3. Such a *systematical proposal of doctrines,* truths, or articles of faith, as some require, would not have answered the great ends of the Scripture itself. All that can be supposed of benefit thereby is only that it would lead us more easily into a *methodical comprehension* of the truths so proposed; but this we may attain, and not be rendered one jot more *like unto God* thereby. The principal end of

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the Scripture is of another nature. It is, to beget in the minds of men faith, fear, obedience, and reverence of God,—to make them holy and righteous; and those such as have in themselves various weaknesses, temptations, and inclinations unto the contrary, which must be obviated and subdued. Unto this end every truth is disposed of in the Scripture as it ought to be. If any expect that the Scripture should be written with respect unto *opinions*, *notions*, and *speculations*, to render men *skilful* and cunning in them, able to talk and dispute about *all things* and *nothing*, they are mistaken. It is given us to make us *humble*, *holy*, *wise* in spiritual things; to direct us in our *duties*, to relieve us against *temptations*, to comfort us under *troubles*, to make us to love God and to live unto him, in all that variety of circumstances, occasions, temptations, trials, duties, which in this world we are called unto. Unto this end there is a more glorious power and efficacy in one *epistle*, one *psalm*, one *chapter*, than in all the writings of men, though they have their use also. He that hath not experience hereof is a stranger unto the power of God in the Scripture. Sometimes the design and scope of the place, sometimes the circumstances related unto, mostly that *spirit of wisdom and holiness* which evidenceth itself in the whole, do effectually influence our minds; yea, sometimes an *occasional passage in a story*, a word or expression, shall contribute more to excite faith and love in our souls than a volume of learned disputations. It doth not *argue*, *syllogize*, or *allure* the mind; but *it enlightens*, *persuades*, *constrains* the soul unto faith and obedience. This it is prepared for and suited unto.

4. The disposition of divine revelations in the Scripture is also *subservient unto other ends* of the wisdom of God towards the church. Some of them may be named:—

(1.) *To render useful and necessary the great ordinance of the ministry.* God hath not designed to instruct and save his church by any one outward ordinance only. The ways and means of doing good unto us, so as that all may issue in his own eternal glory, are known unto infinite wisdom only. The institution of the whole *series and complex* of divine ordinances is no otherwise to be accounted for but by a regard and submission thereunto. Who can deny but that God might both have instructed, sanctified, and saved us, without the use of *some* or *all* of those institutions which he hath obliged us unto? His *infinitely wise will* is the only reason of these things. And he will have every one of his appointments, on which he hath *put his name*, to be honoured. Such is the *ministry*. A means this is not *co-ordinate* with the Scripture, but *subservient* unto it; and the great end of it is, that those who are called thereunto, and are furnished with gifts for the discharge of it, might diligently "search the Scrip-

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tures," and teach others the mind of God revealed therein. It was, I say, the will of God that the church should ordinarily be always under the conduct of such a *ministry;* and his will it is that those who are called thereunto should be furnished with *peculiar spiritual gifts,* for the finding out and declaration of the truths that are treasured up in the Scripture, unto all the ends of divine revelation. See Eph. iv. 11–16; 2 Tim. iii. 14–17. The Scripture, therefore, is such a revelation as doth suppose and make necessary this ordinance of the ministry, wherein and whereby God will also be glorified. And it were well if the *nature and duties* of this office were better *understood* than they seem to be. God hath accommodated the revelation of himself in the Scripture with respect unto them; and those by whom the due discharge of this office is despised or neglected do sin greatly against the authority, wisdom, and love of God; and those do no less by whom it is assumed but not rightly understood or not duly improved.

But it may be said, "Why did not *the Holy Ghost dispose of all things so plainly in the Scripture that every individual person might have attained the knowledge of them without the use of this ministry?*" I answer,—It is a proud and foolish thing to inquire for any reasons of the ways and works of God antecedent unto his own will. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," Eph. i. 11; and therein are we to acquiesce. Yet we may see the wisdom of *what he hath done;* as herein,—1. He would glorify his own power, in working great effects by *vile, weak means,* 1 Cor. iii. 7; 2 Cor. iv. 7. 2. He did it to magnify his Son Jesus Christ in the communication of *spiritual gifts,* Acts ii. 33; Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. 3. To show that in and by the work of his grace he designed not to destroy or contradict the faculties of our nature, which at first he created. He would work on them, and work a change in them, by means suited unto their constitution and nature; which is done in the *ministry* of the word, 2 Cor. v. 18–20.

(2.) The *disposition of the Scripture* respects the duty of all believers in the exercise of their faith and obedience. They know that all their light and direction, all their springs of spiritual strength and consolation, are treasured up in the Scripture; but, in the unspeakable variety of their occasions, they know not *where every particular provision for these ends* is stored. Hence it is their duty to *meditate upon the word day and night;* to "seek for wisdom as silver, and to search for it as for hid treasures," that they may "understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God," Prov. ii. 3–5. And this being a duty whereunto the exercise of all graces is required, they are all improved thereby. The soul which is hereby engaged unto constant converse with God will thrive more

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in that which is the proper end of the Scripture,—namely, "the fear of the LORD,"—than it could do under any other kind of teaching.

(3.) *A continual search into the whole Scripture, without a neglect of any part of it,* is hereby rendered necessary. And hereby are our souls prepared on all occasions, and influenced in the whole course of our obedience; for the whole and every part of the word is blessed unto our good, according to the prayer of our Saviour, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. There is power put forth in and by every part and parcel of it unto our sanctification; and there is such a distribution of *useful truths* through the whole, that everywhere we may meet with what is prepared for us and suited unto our condition. It is to me no small argument of the *divine original of the Scripture*, and of the presence of God in it, that there is no *thought of our hearts* with respect unto the proper end of the Scripture,—that is, our living unto God so as to come unto the enjoyment of him,—but that we shall find, at one time or other, a due *adjustment* of it therein, in one place or other.

There can no *frame* befall the hearts of believers as unto spiritual things, whether it be as unto their *thriving* or *decay*, but there is a disposition of spiritual provision for it; and ofttimes we shall find it then opening itself when we least look for it. *Powerful instructions, as unto our practice,* do often arise out of circumstances, occasional words and expressions; all arguing an infinite wisdom in their provision, whereunto every future occurrence was in open view from eternity, and a present divine efficacy in the word's application of itself unto our souls. How often in the reading of it do we meet with, and are as it were surprised with, *gracious words*, that enlighten, quicken, comfort, endear, and engage our souls! How often do we find sin wounded, grace encouraged, faith excited, love inflamed, and this in that endless variety of inward frames and outward occasions which we are liable unto! I shall say with confidence, that he never was acquainted with the *excellency of the Scripture*, with its power and efficacy, in any holy experience, who is capable of fancying that divine revelations might have been disposed unto more advantage with respect unto our living unto God. And these things are sufficient for the removal of the objection before mentioned.

SECONDLY, The Holy Spirit hath so disposed of the Scripture *that the mind of God in all things concerning our faith and obedience, in the knowledge whereof our illumination doth consist, is clearly revealed therein.* There needs no other argument to prove any thing *not to belong* unto our religion than that it is *not revealed* or appointed in the Scripture; no other to prove any truth not to be

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indispensably necessary unto our faith or obedience than that it is not *clearly revealed* in the Scripture. But in this assertion we must take along with us these two suppositions:—

1. That we look on the Scripture and receive it *not as the word of men*, but as it is indeed, the *word of the living God*. If we look for that *perspicuity* and *clearness* in the expression of divine revelation which men endeavour to give unto the declaration of their minds in things natural, by artificial methods and order, by the application of words and terms invented and disposed of on purpose to accommodate what is spoken unto the common notions and reasonings of men, we may be mistaken; nor would it have become divine wisdom and authority to have made use of such methods, ways, or arts. There is that *plainness* and *perspicuity* in it which become the holy, wise God to make use of; whose words are to be received with reverence, with submission of mind and conscience unto his authority, and fervent prayer that we may understand his mind and do his will. Thus all things are made plain unto the meanest capacity; yet not so, but that if the most wise and learned do not see the characters of infinite divine wisdom on things that seem most obvious and most exposed unto vulgar apprehension, they have no *true wisdom* in them. In those very *fords* and appearing *shallows* of this river of God where the *lamb* may wade, the *elephant* may swim. Every thing in the Scripture is so plain as that the *meanest believer* may understand all that belongs unto his duty or is necessary unto his happiness; yet is nothing so plain but that the wisest of them all have reason to adore the depths and stores of divine wisdom in it. All apprehensions of the obscurity of the Scripture arise from one of these two causes:—

(1.) That the minds of men are prepossessed with *opinions, dogmas, principles*, and practices in religion, received by tradition from their fathers; or have vehement and corrupt inclinations unto such ways, practices, and opinions, as suit their carnal reason and interest. It is no wonder if such persons conceive the Scripture *dark and obscure;* for they can neither find that in it which they most desire, nor can understand what is revealed in it, because opposite unto their prejudices, affections, and interests. The design of the Scripture is, to *destroy that frame of mind in them which they would have established;* and no man is to look for *light* in the Scripture to give countenance unto his own *darkness*.

(2.) It will appear *obscure* unto all men who come to the reading and study of it in the *mere strength of their own natural abilities;* and, it may be, it is on this account that some have esteemed St Paul *one of the obscurest writers that ever they read*. Wherefore, as a book written in Greek or Hebrew must be obscure unto them

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who have no skill in these languages, so will the Scripture be unto all who are unfurnished with those spiritual preparations which are required unto the right understanding of it; for,—

2. It is supposed, when we assert the *clearness and perspicuity* of the Scripture, that there is unto the understanding of it use made of that *aid* and *assistance* of the Spirit of God concerning which we do discourse. Without this the *clearest revelations* of divine supernatural things will appear as wrapped up in darkness and obscurity: not for want of *light in them*, but for want of *light in us*. Wherefore, by asserting the necessity of supernatural illumination for the right understanding of divine revelation, we no way impeach the *perspicuity* of the Scripture. All things wherein our faith and obedience are concerned are clearly declared therein; howbeit when all is done, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them," until the eyes of his understanding be enlightened.

3. The Holy Spirit hath so disposed the Scripture, that notwithstanding that *perspicuity* which is in the whole with respect unto its proper end, yet are there in sundry parts or passages of it,—(1.) *Τινὰ δυσνόητα*, some things "hard to be understood;" and, (2.) *Τινὰ δυσερμήνευτα*, some things "hard to be uttered or interpreted." The former are the things themselves, which are so in their *own nature;* the latter are so from the *manner* of their declaration.

(1.) There are in the Scripture *τινὰ δυσνόητα*, things *deep, wonderful, mysterious*, such as in their own nature do absolutely exceed the whole compass of our understanding or reason, as unto a full and perfect comprehension of them. Nor ought it to be strange unto any that sundry *divine revelations* should be of things in their own nature incomprehensible; for as unto us, many earthly and natural things are so, as David affirms concerning the forming of our natures in the womb, Ps. cxxxix. 5, 6, 14–16. And our Saviour assures us that heavenly things are much more above our comprehension than earthly, John iii. 12. Such as these are, the *Trinity*, or the subsistence of one *single divine nature in three persons;* the *incarnation* of Christ, or the assumption of our human nature into personal union and subsistence with the Son of God; the *eternal decrees* of God, their nature, order, causes, and effects; the *resurrection* of the dead; the *manner* of the operations of the Holy Spirit in forming the new creature in us, and sundry others. Our rational faculties in their utmost improvement in this world, and under the highest advantage they are capable of by spiritual light and grace, are not able, with all their searchings, to find out the Almighty unto perfection in these things. And in all disputes about the light of glory,—as whether we shall be able thereby to behold the essence of God, to discern the

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depths of the mystery of the incarnation, and the like,—men do but "darken counsel by words without knowledge," and talk of what they neither do nor can understand. But yet the wisdom of the Holy Spirit hath in these two ways provided that we shall not suffer from our own weakness:—

[1.] In that whatever is necessary for us to believe concerning these things is *plainly and clearly revealed* in the Scripture, and that revelation declared in such propositions and expressions as are obvious unto our understandings. And he who thinks we can believe nothing as unto its *truth* but what we can comprehend as unto its *nature* overthrows all faith and reason also; and propositions may be clear unto us in their sense, when their subject-matter is incomprehensible. For instance, consider the *incarnation of the Son of God*, and the *hypostatical union* therein of the divine and human natures; it is a thing above our reason and comprehension: but in the Scripture it is plainly asserted and declared that "the Word, which was God, and was with God," was "made flesh;" that "God was manifest in the flesh;" that "the Son of God was made of a woman, made under the law;" that "he took on him the seed of Abraham;" that "he came of the Jews according to the flesh," and "is over all, God blessed for ever;" and that so "God redeemed his church with his own blood." Thus plainly and perspicuously is this great matter, as it is the object of our faith, as it is proposed unto us to be believed, declared and expressed unto us. If any one shall now say that he *will not believe that to be the sense of these expressions* which the words do plainly and undeniably manifest so to be, and are withal incapable of any other sense or construction, because he cannot understand or comprehend the thing itself which is signified thereby, it is plainly to say that he will believe nothing on the authority and veracity of God revealing it, but what he can comprehend by his own reason that he will believe; which is to overthrow all faith divine. The reason of our believing, if we believe at all, is God's *revelation of the truth*, and not our understanding of the nature of the things revealed. Thereinto is our faith resolved, when our reason reacheth not unto the nature and existence of the things themselves. And the work of the Spirit it is to *bring into captivity* unto the obedience of the faith every thought that might arise from our ignorance, or the impotency of our minds to comprehend the things to be believed. And that new religion of *Socinianism*, which pretends to reduce all to reason, is wholly built upon the most irrational principle that ever befell the minds of men. It is this alone: "*What we cannot comprehend in things divine and infinite, as unto their own nature, that we are not to believe in their revelation.*" On this ground alone do the men of that persuasion reject the doctrine of the Trinity, of the

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incarnation of the Son of God, of the resurrection of the dead, and the like mysteries of faith. Whatever testimony the Scripture gives unto them, because their reason cannot comprehend them, they profess they will not believe them;—a principle wild and irrational, and which leads unto atheism, seeing the being of God itself is absolutely incomprehensible.

[2.] That degree of knowledge which we can attain in and about these things is *every way sufficient with respect unto the end of the revelation itself.* If they were so proposed unto us as that, if we could not fully comprehend them, we should have no benefit or advantage by them, the revelation itself would be lost, and the end of God frustrated therein. But this could not become divine wisdom and goodness, to make such propositions unto us: for this defect ariseth not from any blamable *depravation of our nature* as corrupted, but from the very *essence and being* of it as created; for being finite and limited, it cannot perfectly comprehend things infinite. But whatever believers are able to attain unto, in that variety of the degrees of knowledge which in their several circumstances they do attain, is *sufficient* unto the end whereunto it is designed; that is, sufficient to ingenerate, cherish, increase, and preserve faith, and love, and reverence, with holy obedience, in them, in such a way and manner as will assuredly bring them unto the end of all supernatural revelation in the *enjoyment* of God.

(2.) There are in the Scripture τινὰ δυσερμήνευτα, some things that are "hard to be interpreted;" not from the *nature* of the things revealed, but from the *manner* of their revelation. Such are many *allegories, parables, mystical stories, allusions, unfulfilled prophecies* and *predictions, references* unto the then *present customs, persons,* and *places, computation of times, genealogies,* the *signification of some single words seldom or but once used* in the Scripture, the *names of divers birds* and *beasts* unknown to us. Such things have a difficulty in them from the *manner* of their declaration; and it is hard to find out, and it may be in some instances impossible, unto any determinate certainty, the proper, genuine sense of them in the places where they occur. But herein also we have a *relief* provided, in the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in giving the whole Scripture for our instruction, against any *disadvantage* unto our faith or obedience; for,—

[1.] Whatever is *so delivered* in any place, if it be of importance for us to know and believe, as unto the ends of divine revelation, it is in some other place or places *unveiled* and plainly declared; so that we may say of it as the disciples said unto our Saviour, "Lo, now he speaketh plainly, and not in parables." There can be no instance given of any obscure place or passage in the Scripture, con-

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cerning which a man may rationally suppose or conjecture that there is any *doctrinal truth* requiring our obedience contained in it, which is not elsewhere explained. And there may be several reasons why the Holy Spirit chose to express his mind at any time in such ways as had so much *obscurity* attending of them:—

1*st.* As for *types, allegories, mystical stories,* and *obscure predictions,* he made use of them under the Old Testament on purpose to draw a *veil* over the things signified in them, or the truths taught by them; for the church was not yet to be acquainted with the clear knowledge of the things concerning Jesus Christ and his mediation. They had not so much as a *perfect image* of the things themselves, but only an *obscure shadow* or representation of good things to come, Heb. x. 1. To have given unto them *a full and clear revelation* of all divine truths would have cast the whole design of God for the various states of the church, and the accomplishment of the great work of his grace and love, into disorder. It was not hard, then, for the church to be taught of old in *types and allegories;* but it was much grace and mercy that through them the light of the *Sun of Righteousness* so far beamed on them as enabled them comfortably to wait "until the day did break and the shadows flee away," as Cant. iv. 6. The fulness and glory of the revelation of *grace and truth* was reserved for Jesus Christ. God did them no wrong, but reserved "better things for us," Heb. xi. 40.

2*dly.* Whatever seems yet to be continued under any obscurity of revelation is so continued for the *exercise of our faith, diligence, humility, and dependence on God,* in our inquiries into them. And suppose we do not always attain precisely unto the proper and peculiar intendment of the Holy Spirit in them, as we can never search out his mind unto perfection, yet are there so many and great advantages to be obtained by the due exercise of those graces in the study of the word, that we can be no *losers* by any difficulties we can meet withal. The rule in this case is, That we *affix no sense unto any obscure or difficult passage of Scripture but what is materially true and consonant unto other express and plain testimonies.* For men to raise peculiar senses from such places, not confirmed elsewhere, is a dangerous curiosity.

3*dly.* As to sundry *prophecies of future revolutions in the church and the world,* like those in the Revelation, there was an indispensable necessity of giving them out in that obscurity of *allegorical expressions* and *representations* wherein we find them; for I could easily manifest that as the clear and determinate declaration of *future events* in plain *historical expressions* is contrary to the nature of *prophecy,* so in this case it would have been a means of bringing confusion on the works of God in the world, and of turning all men

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out of the way of their obedience. Their present revelation is sufficient to guide the faith and regulate the obedience of the church, so far as they are concerned in them.

4thly. Some things are in the Scripture disposed on purpose that *evil, perverse,* and *proud men* may *stumble and fall at them,* or be farther hardened in their unbelief and obstinacy. So our Lord Jesus Christ affirms that he spake unto the *stubborn Jews in parables that they might not understand.* And whereas "there must be *heresies,* that they which are approved may be made manifest," 1 Cor. xi. 19; and some are "of old ordained to this condemnation," Jude 4; some things are so declared that from them proud, perverse, and wrangling spirits may take occasion to "wrest them unto their own destruction." The truths of Christ as well as his person are appointed to be a "stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," yea, "a gin and a snare" unto many. But this, humble, teachable believers are not concerned in.

[2.] The Holy Spirit hath given us a relief in this matter, by supplying us with a *rule of the interpretation of Scripture, which whilst we sincerely attend unto we are in no danger of sinfully corrupting the word of God,* although we should not arrive unto its proper meaning in every particular place; and this rule is, the *analogy* or "proportion of faith."[1] "Let him that prophesieth," saith the apostle,—that is, expoundeth the Scripture in the church,—"do it according to the proportion of faith," Rom. xii. 6. And this *analogy* or "proportion of faith" is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scripture as the rule of our faith and obedience. When men will engage their inquiries into parts of the Scripture *mystical, allegorical,* or *prophetical,* aiming to find out, it may be, things new and curious, without a constant regard unto this *analogy of faith,* it is no wonder if they wander out of the way and err concerning the truth, as many have done on that occasion. And I cannot but declare my detestation of those bold and curious conjectures which, without any regard unto the *rule of prophecy,* many have indulged themselves in on obscure passages in the Scripture. But now suppose a man brings no preconceived sense or opinion of his own unto such places, seeking countenance thereunto from them, which is the bane of all interpretation of the Scripture; suppose him to come in some measure prepared with the spiritual qualifications be-

[1] There seems a general agreement among modern critics that this expression of the apostle is not susceptible of the meaning which is here attached to it. It does not refer to any rule according to which we are to try a doctrine by its harmony with the system of divine truth as a whole (although the rule itself is sound and valuable); but the passage simply means that a man is to preach or prophesy "according to the measure of *his* faith,"—the μέτρον πίστεως of which the apostle had been speaking in verse 3.—ED.

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fore mentioned, and in all his inquiries to have a constant due regard unto the *analogy of faith*, so as not to admit of any sense which interfereth with what is elsewhere plainly declared,—such a person shall not miss of the mind of the Holy Spirit, or if he do, shall be assuredly preserved from any hurtful danger in his mistakes: for there is that mutual relation one to another, yea, that mutual inbeing of all divine truths, in their proposal and revelation in the Scripture, as that every one of them is after a sort in every place, though not *properly* and *peculiarly*, yet by *consequence* and *coherence*. Wherefore, although a man should miss of the *first proper sense* of any obscure place of Scripture, which, with all our diligence, we ought to aim at, yet, whilst he receiveth none but what contains a truth agreeable unto what is revealed in other places, the error of his mind neither endangereth his own faith or obedience nor those of any others.

[3.] For those things which are peculiarly difficult, as *genealogies, chronological computations* of time, and the like, which are accidental unto the design of the Scripture, those who are able so to do, unto their own edification or that of others, may exercise themselves therein, but by all others the consideration of them in particular may be safely omitted.

And these are the heads of the *work of the Holy Spirit on our minds and on the Scriptures*, considered distinctly and apart, with reference unto the right understanding of the *mind of God in them*. By the former sort, *our minds* are prepared to understand the Scripture; and by the latter, *Scripture* is prepared and suited unto our understandings. There yet remains the consideration of what he doth, or what help he affords unto us, in the *actual application of our minds unto the understanding and interpretation of the word;* and this respecteth the means which we are to make use of unto that end and purpose; and these also shall be briefly declared.

CHAPTER VII.

Means to be used for the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture—Those which are prescribed in a way of duty.

THE means to be used for the right understanding and interpretation of the Scripture are of two sorts:—I. That which is general and absolutely necessary. II. Such as consist in the due improvement thereof.

I. The first is *diligent reading of the Scripture, with a sedate, rational consideration of what we read*. Nothing is more frequently

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commended unto us; and, not to insist on particular testimonies, the whole 119th Psalm is spent in the declaration of this duty, and the benefits which are attained thereby. Herein consists the first natural exercise of our minds in order unto the understanding of it. So the eunuch read and pondered on the prophecy of Isaiah, though of himself he could not attain the understanding of what he read, Acts viii. 30, 31. Either reading, or that which is equivalent thereunto, is that whereby we do, and without which it is impossible we should, apply our minds to know what is contained in the Scriptures; and this is that which all other means are designed to render useful. Now, by this *reading* I understand that which is *staid, sedate, considerative,* with respect unto the end aimed at; *reading* attended with a due consideration of the things *read,* inquiry into them, meditation on them, with a regard unto the design and scope of the place, with all other advantages for the due investigation of the truth.

Frequent reading of the word more generally and cursorily, whereunto all Christians ought to be trained from their youth, 2 Tim. iii. 15, and which all closets and families should be acquainted withal, Deut. vi. 6–9, is of great use and advantage; and I shall, therefore, name some particular benefits which may be received thereby:—

1. Hereby the minds of men are brought into a *general acquaintance* with the nature and design of the *book of God;* which some, to their present shame and future ruin, are prodigiously ignorant of.

2. They who are exercised herein come to know *distinctly* what things are treated of in the *particular books* and passages of it; whilst others who live in a *neglect of this duty* scarce know what books are *historical,* what *prophetical,* or what *doctrinal,* in the whole Bible.

3. Hereby they exercise themselves unto *thoughts of heavenly things* and a holy converse with God; if they bring along with them, as they ought, hearts *humble* and sensible of his authority in the word.

4. Their minds are insensibly furnished with *due conceptions about God, spiritual things, themselves,* and *their conditions;* and their memories with expressions proper and meet to be used about them in prayer or otherwise.

5. God oftentimes takes occasion herein to *influence their souls* with the efficacy of divine truth in particular, in the way of *exhortation, reproof, instruction,* or *consolation;* whereof all who attend diligently unto this duty have experience.

6. They come, by "reason of use," to have "their senses exercised to discern good and evil;" so that if any noxious or corrupt sense of any place of the Scripture be suggested unto them, they have in readi-

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ness wherewith to oppose it from other places from whence they are instructed in the truth.

And many other advantages there are which men may reap from the *constant reading* of the Scripture; which I therefore reckon as a *general means* of coming to the knowledge of the mind of God therein. But this is not that which at present I especially intend. Wherefore,—

By this *reading* of the Scripture I mean the studying of it, in the use of means, to come to a due understanding of it in particular places; for it is about the means of the *solemn interpretation* of the Scripture that we now inquire. Hereunto, I say, the general study of the whole, and in particular the places to be interpreted, is required. It may seem altogether needless and impertinent to give this direction for the understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture, namely, that we should read and study it to that end; for who can imagine how it should be done otherwise? But I wish the practice of many, it may be, of the most, did not render this direction necessary; for in their design to come to the knowledge of spiritual things, the direct immediate study of the Scripture is that which they least of all apply themselves unto. Other writings they will read and study with diligence; but their reading of the Scripture is for the most part superficial, without that intension of mind and spirit, that use and application of means, which are necessary unto the understanding of it, as the event doth manifest. It is the immediate study of the Scripture that I intend. And hereunto I do refer,—1. A due consideration of the *analogy of faith* always to be retained; 2. A due examination of the *design and scope of the place;* 3. A diligent observation of *antecedents* and *consequents;* with all those general rules which are usually given as directions in the interpretation of the Scripture. This, therefore, in the diligent exercise of our minds and reasons, is the first general outward means of knowing the mind of God in the Scripture and the interpretation thereof.

II. The means designed for the improvement hereof, or our profitable use of it, are of three sorts:—1. *Spiritual;* 2. *Disciplinary;* 3. *Ecclesiastical.* Some instances on each head will farther clear what I intend.

FIRST. 1. The first thing required as a *spiritual means* is *prayer.* I intend *fervent and earnest prayer* for the assistance of the Spirit of God revealing the mind of God, as in the whole Scripture, so in particular books and passages of it. I have proved before that this is both enjoined and commanded unto us by the practice of the *prophets* and *apostles.* And this also, by the way, invincibly proves that the due investigation of the mind of God in the Scripture is a

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work above the utmost improvement of natural reason, with all outward advantages whatsoever; for were we sufficient of ourselves, without immediate divine aid and assistance, for this work, why do we pray for them? with which argument the ancient church perpetually urged the *Pelagians* as to the necessity of saving grace. And it may be justly supposed that no man who professeth himself a Christian can be so forsaken of all sobriety as once to question whether this be the *duty of every one* who hath either desire or design to attain any real knowledge of the will of God in the Scripture. But the practical neglect of this duty is the true reason why so many that are skilful enough in the *disciplinary means of knowledge* are yet such strangers to the true knowledge of the mind of God. And this prayer is of two sorts:—

(1.) That which respects the *teaching of the Spirit* in general, whereby we labour in our prayers *that he would enlighten our minds and lead us into the knowledge of the truth*, according to the work before described. The *importance of this grace* unto our faith and obedience, the *multiplied promises* of God concerning it, our necessity of it from our natural weakness, ignorance, and darkness, should render it a principal part of our daily supplications. Especially is this incumbent on them who are called in an especial manner to "search the Scriptures" and to declare the mind of God in them unto others. And great are the advantages which a conscientious discharge of this duty, with a due reverence of God, brings along with it. Prejudices, preconceived opinions, engagements by secular advantages, false confidences, authority of men, influences from parties and societies, will be all laid level before it, at least be gradually exterminated out of the minds of men thereby. And how much the casting out of all this "old leaven" tends to prepare the mind for, and to give it a due understanding of, divine revelations, hath been proved before. I no way doubt but that the rise and continuance of all those *enormous errors* which so infest Christian religion, and which many seek so sedulously to confirm from the Scripture itself, are in a great measure to be ascribed unto the corrupt affections, with the power of tradition and influences of secular advantages; which cannot firm their station in the minds of them who are constant, sincere suppliants at the throne of grace to be taught of God what is his mind and will in his word, for it includes a *prevailing resolution* sincerely to receive what we are so instructed in, whatever effects it may have upon the inward or outward man. And this is the only way to preserve our souls under the influences of divine teachings and the irradiation of the Holy Spirit; without which we can neither learn nor know any thing as we ought. I suppose, therefore, this may be fixed on as a *common*

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principle of Christianity, namely, that constant and fervent prayer for the divine assistance of the Holy Spirit is such an indispensable means for the attaining the knowledge of the mind of God in the Scripture as that without it all others will not be available.

Nor do I believe that any one who doth and can thus pray as he ought, in a conscientious study of the word, shall ever be left unto the *final prevalency* of any pernicious error or the ignorance of any fundamental truth. None utterly miscarry in the seeking after the mind of God but those who are perverted by their own corrupt minds. Whatever appearance there be of sincerity and diligence in seeking after truth, if men miscarry therein, it is far more safe to judge that they do so either through the neglect of this duty or indulgence unto some corruption of their hearts and minds, than that God is wanting to reveal himself unto those that diligently seek him. And there are unfailing grounds of this assurance; for,—[1.] Faith exercised in this duty will work out all that "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness" which would hinder us so to "receive with meekness the ingrafted word" as that it should "save our souls." [2.] It will work in the mind those gracious qualifications of *humility and meekness*, whereunto the teachings of God are promised in an especial manner, as we have showed. And, [3.] Our Saviour hath assured us that his heavenly Father will "give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him," Luke xi. 13. Neither is any supplication for the Holy Spirit more acceptable unto God than that which designs the knowledge of his mind and will that we may do them. [4.] All those *graces* which render the mind *teachable and meet unto the reception of heavenly truths* are kept up unto a due exercise therein. If we deceive not ourselves in these things we cannot be deceived; for in the discharge of this duty those things are learned in their *power* whereof we have the *notion* only in other means of instruction. And hereby whatever we learn is so fixed upon our minds, possesseth them with such power, transforming them into the likeness of it, as that they are prepared for the communication of farther light, and increases in the degrees of knowledge.

Nor can it be granted, on the other hand, that any sacred truth is learned in a *due manner*, whatever diligence be used in its acquisition, or that we can know the mind of God in the Scripture in any thing as we ought, when the management of all other means which we make use of unto that end is not committed unto the hand of this duty. The apostle, desiring earnestly that those unto whom he wrote, and whom he instructed in the mysteries of the gospel, might have a due spiritual understanding of the mind of God as revealed and taught in them, prays with all fervency of mind that they might have a communication of "the Spirit of wisdom and

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revelation" from above, to enable them thereunto, Eph. i. 16–19, iii. 14–19; for without this he knew it could not be attained. That which he did for them we are obliged to do for *ourselves*. And where this is neglected, especially considering that the *supplies of the Spirit* unto this purpose are confined unto them that *ask* him, there is no ground of expectation that any one should ever learn the saving knowledge of the mind of God in a due manner.

I shall, therefore, fix this assertion as a sacred truth: *Whoever, in the diligent and immediate study of the Scripture to know the mind of God therein so as to do it, doth abide in fervent supplications, in and by Jesus Christ, for supplies of the Spirit of grace, to lead him into all truth, to reveal and make known unto him the truth as it is in Jesus, to give him an understanding of the Scriptures and the will of God therein, he shall be preserved from pernicious errors, and attain that degree in knowledge as shall be sufficient unto the guidance and preservation of the life of God in the whole of his faith and obedience.* And more security of truth there is herein than in men's giving themselves up unto any other conduct in this world whatever. The goodness of God, his faithfulness in being the "rewarder of them that diligently seek him," the command of this duty unto this end, the promises annexed unto it, with the whole nature of religion, do give us the highest security herein. And although these *duties* cannot but be accompanied with a conscientious care and fear of errors and mistakes, yet the *persons* that are found in them have no ground of troublesome thoughts or fearful suspicions that they shall be deceived or fail in the end they aim at.

(2.) Prayer respects *particular occasions*, or especial places of Scripture, whose exposition or interpretation we inquire after. This is the great duty of a *faithful interpreter*, that which in, with, and after, the use of all means, he betakes himself unto. An experience of divine guidance and assistance herein is that which unto some is invaluable, however by others it be despised. But shall we think it strange for a Christian, when, it may be after the use of all other means, he finds himself at a loss about the true meaning and intention of the Holy Spirit in any place or text of Scripture, to betake himself in a more than ordinary manner unto God by *prayer*, that he would by his Spirit enlighten, guide, teach, and so reveal the truth unto him? or should we think it strange that God should hear such prayers, and instruct such persons in the secrets of his covenant? God forbid there should be such *atheistical* thoughts in the minds of any who would be esteemed Christians! Yea, I must say, that for a man to undertake the interpretation of any part or portion of Scripture in a solemn manner, without *invocation of God* to be taught and instructed by his Spirit, is a high provocation of him;

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nor shall I expect the discovery of truth from any one who so proudly and ignorantly engageth in a work so much above his ability to manage. I speak this of solemn and stated interpretations; for otherwise a "scribe ready furnished for the kingdom of God" may, as he hath occasion, from the spiritual light and understanding wherewith he is endued, and the stores he hath already received, declare the mind of God unto the edification of others. But this is the first means to render our *studying of the Scripture* useful and effectual unto the end aimed at.

This, as was said, is the *sheet-anchor* of a faithful expositor of the Scripture, which he betakes himself unto in all difficulties; nor can he without it be led into a comfortable satisfaction that he hath attained the mind of the Holy Ghost in any divine revelation. When all other helps fail, as he shall in most places find them to do, if he be really intent on the disquisition of truth, this will yield him his best relief. And so long as this is attended unto, we need not fear farther useful interpretations of the Scripture, or the several parts of it, than as yet have been attained unto by the endeavours of others; for the stores of truth laid up in it are inexhaustible, and hereby will they be opened unto those that inquire into them with humility and diligence. The labours of those who have gone before us are of excellent use herein, but they are yet very far from having discovered the *depths* of this vein of wisdom; nor will the best of our endeavours prescribe limits and bounds to them that shall come after us. And the reason why the *generality of expositors* go in the same track one after another, seldom passing beyond the beaten path of former endeavours, unless it be in some excursions of curiosity, is the want of giving up themselves unto the conduct of the Holy Spirit in the diligent performance of this duty.

2. *Readiness to receive impressions from divine truths as revealed unto us*, conforming our minds and hearts unto the doctrine made known, is another means unto the same end. This is the first end of all divine revelations, of all heavenly truths, namely, to beget the image and likeness of themselves in the minds of men, Rom. vi. 17, 2 Cor. iii. 18; and we miss our aim if this be not the first thing we intend in the study of the Scripture. It is not to learn *the form of the doctrine of godliness*, but to get the *power* of it implanted in our souls. And this is an eminent means of our making a progress in the knowledge of the truth. To seek after mere *notions of truth*, without an endeavour after an *experience of its power* in our hearts, is not the way to increase our understanding in spiritual things. He alone is in a posture to learn from God who sincerely gives up his mind, conscience, and affections to the power and rule of what is revealed unto him. Men may have in their study of the Scripture

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other ends also, as the profit and edification of others; *but if this conforming of their own souls unto the power of the word* be not fixed in the first place in their minds, they do not *strive lawfully nor will be crowned.* And if at any time, when we study the word, we have not this design expressly in our minds, yet if, upon the discovery of any truth, we endeavour not to have the likeness of it in our own hearts, we lose our principal advantage by it.

3. *Practical obedience in the course of our walking before God* is another means unto the same end. The gospel is the "truth which is according unto godliness," Titus i. 1; and it will not long abide with any who follow not after godliness according unto its guidance and direction. Hence we see so many lose that very understanding which they had of the doctrines of it, when once they begin to give up themselves to ungodly lives. The true notion of *holy, evangelical truths* will not *live*, at least not *flourish*, where they are divided from a holy conversation. As we learn all to practise, so we learn much by practice. There is no *practical science* which we can make any great improvement of without an assiduous practice of its *theorems;* much less is *wisdom*, such as is the understanding of the mysteries of the Scripture, to be increased, unless a man be *practically conversant* about the things which it directs unto.

And hereby alone we can come unto the *assurance* that what we know and learn is indeed the truth. So our Saviour tells us that "if any man do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," John vii. 17. Whilst men learn the truth only in the notion of it, whatever conviction of its being so it is accompanied withal, they will never attain *stability* in their minds concerning it, nor come to the *full assurance of understanding*, unless they continually exemplify it in their own obedience, doing the will of God. This is that which will give them a satisfactory persuasion of it. And hereby will they be led continually into farther degrees of knowledge; for the mind of man is capable of receiving *continual supplies* in the increase of light and knowledge whilst it is in this world, if so be they are improved unto their proper end in obedience unto God. But without this the mind will be quickly stuffed with notions, so that no streams can descend into it from the fountain of truth.

4. *A constant design for growth and a progress in knowledge, out of love to the truth and experience of its excellency*, is useful, yea, needful, unto the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scriptures. Some are quickly apt to think that they know *enough*, as much as is needful for them; some, that they know *all* that is to be known, or have a sufficient comprehension of all the counsels of God as revealed in the Scripture, or, as they rather judge, of the whole

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body of divinity, in all the parts of it, which they may have disposed into an exact method with great accuracy and skill. No great or useful discoveries of the mind of God shall I expect from such persons. Another frame of heart and spirit is required in them who design to be instructed in the mind of God, or to learn it in the study of the Scripture. Such persons look upon it as a treasury of divine truths, absolutely unfathomable by any created understanding. The truths which they do receive from thence, and comprehend according to their measure therein, they judge *amiable, excellent, and desirable* above all earthly things; for they find the fruit, benefit, and advantage of them, in strengthening the life of God in them, conforming their souls unto him, and communicating of his light, love, grace, and power unto them.

This makes them with purpose of heart continually to press, in the use of all means, to increase in this wisdom,—to grow in the knowledge of God and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They are pressing on continually unto that measure of perfection which in this life is attainable; and every new beam of truth whereby their minds are enlightened guides them into fresh discoveries of it. This frame of mind is under a promise of divine teaching: Hos. vi. 3, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD." Prov. ii. 3–5, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God." When men live in a holy admiration of and complacency in God, as the God of truth, as the first infinite essential Truth, in whose enjoyment alone there is fulness of all satisfactory light and knowledge; when they adore the fulness of those revelations of himself which, with infinite wisdom, he hath treasured up in the Scriptures; when they find by experience an excellency, power, and efficacy in what they have attained unto; and, out of a deep sense of the smallness of their measures, of the meanness of their attainments, and how little a portion it is they know of God, do live in a constant design to abide with faith and patience in continual study of the word, and inquiries into the mind of God therein, —*they are in the way of being taught by him*, and learning of his mind unto all the proper ends of its revelation.

5. There are sundry *ordinances of spiritual worship* which God hath ordained as a means of our illumination, a religious attendance whereunto is required of them who intend to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

And this is the first head of means for the due improvement of our endeavours in reading and studying of the Scriptures, that we may come thereby unto a right understanding of the mind of God

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in them, and be able to interpret them unto the use and benefit of others. What is the work of the *Holy Spirit* herein, what is the aid and assistance which he contributes hereunto, is so manifest from what we have discoursed, especially concerning his operations in us as a Spirit of grace and supplication (not yet made public),[1] that it must not be here insisted on.

It may be these means will be despised by some, and the proposal of them to this end looked on as weak and ridiculous, if not extremely *fanciful;* for it is supposed that these things are pressed to no other end but to decry *learning, study,* and the use of reason in the interpretation of the Scriptures, which will quickly reduce all religion into *enthusiasm.* Whether there be any thing of truth in this suggestion shall be immediately discovered. Nor have those by whom these things are pressed the least reason to decline the use of *learning,* or any rational means in their proper place, as though they were conscious to themselves of a deficiency in them with respect unto those by whom they are so highly, and indeed for the most part *vainly,* pretended unto.

But in the matter in hand we must deal with some confidence. They by whom these things are *decried,* by whom they are *denied* to be necessary means for the right understanding of the mind of God in the Scriptures, do plainly renounce the chief principles of Christian religion; for although the Scripture hath many things in *common* with other writings wherein *secular arts and sciences* are declared, yet to suppose that we may attain the sense and mind of God in them by the mere use of such *ways and means* as we apply in the investigation of truths of other natures is to exclude all consideration of God, of Jesus Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of the end of the Scriptures themselves, of the nature and use of the things delivered in them; and, by consequent, to overthrow all religion. See Prov. xxviii. 5.

And this first sort of *means* which we have hitherto insisted on are *duties* in themselves, as well as means unto farther ends; and *all duties* under the gospel are the ways and means wherein and whereby the graces of God are exercised: for as no *grace* can be exerted or exercised but in a way of duty, so no duty is *evangelical* or accepted with God but what especial grace is exercised in. As the word is the rule whereby they are guided, directed, and measured, so the *acting of grace in them* is that whereby they are quickened; without which the best duties are but dead works. *Materially* they are duties, but *formally* they are sins. In their performance, therefore, as gospel duties, and as they are accepted with God, there

[1] The treatise to which Dr Owen alludes was subsequently published, and appears in this volume of his works, page 235.—Ed.

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is an especial aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit. And on that account there is so in the *interpretation* of the Scriptures; for if without his assistance we cannot make use aright of the means of interpreting of the Scripture, we cannot interpret the Scripture without it. The truth is, they who shall either say that these duties are not necessarily required unto them who would "search the Scriptures," and find out the mind of God for their own edification, or so as to expound those oracles of God unto others, or that they may be performed in a manner acceptable unto God and usefully unto this end, without the especial assistance of the Holy Spirit, do *impiously*, what lies in them, evert the whole doctrine of the gospel and the grace thereof.

That which, in the next place, might be insisted on is the consideration of the *especial rules* which have been, or may yet be, given for the right interpretation of the Scriptures. Such are those which concern *the style* of the Scripture, its especial *phraseology*, the *tropes* and *figures* it makes use of, the *way* of its arguing; the *times* and seasons wherein it was written, or the several parts of it; the *occasions* under the guidance of the Spirit of God given thereunto; the *design* and scope of *particular writers*, with what is peculiar unto them in their manner of writing; the *comparing of several places* as to their difference in things and expressions; the reconciliation of seeming contradictions, with other things of an alike nature. But as the most of these may be reduced unto what hath been spoken before about the *disposal and perspicuity* of the Scripture, so they have been already handled by many others at large, and therefore I shall not here insist upon them, but speak only unto the general means that are to be applied unto the same end

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CHAPTER VIII.

The second sort of means for the interpretation of the Scripture, which are disciplinarian.

THE SECOND sort of means I call *disciplinarian*, as consisting in the due use and improvement of *common arts and sciences*, applied unto and made use of in the study of the Scriptures. And these are things which have no *moral good* in themselves, but being indifferent in their own nature, their end, with the manner of their management thereunto, is the only measure and standard of their worth and value. Hence it is that in the application of them unto the *interpretation of the Scripture*, they may be *used aright* and in a due manner, and they

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may be *abused* to the great disadvantage of those who use them; and accordingly it hath fallen out. In the first way they receive a *blessing* from the Spirit of God, who alone prospereth every good and honest endeavour in any kind; and in the latter they are efficacious to *seduce* men unto a trust in their own understandings, which in other things is foolish, and in these things pernicious.

1. That which of this sort I prefer, in the first place, is the *knowledge of and skill in the languages wherein the Scripture was originally written;* for the very words of them therein were peculiarly from the Holy Ghost, which gives them to be דִּבְרֵי אֱמֶת, *words of truth*, and the Scripture itself to be כְּתוּב יָשָׁר, *a right, or upright, or perfect writing*, Eccles. xii. 10. The Scriptures of the Old Testament were given unto the church whilst it was entirely confined unto one nation, Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20. Thence they were all written in that language, which was common among, and peculiar unto, that nation. And this language, as the people itself, was called Hebrew, from Eber the son of Salah, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, their most eminent progenitor, Gen. x. 21–24; for being the one original tongue of mankind, it remained in some part of his family, who probably joined not in the *great apostasy* of the world from God, nor was concerned in their dispersion at the building of Babel, which ensued thereon. The derivation of that name from another *original* is a fruit of curiosity and vain conjecture, as I have elsewhere demonstrated.

In process of time that people were carried into *captivity* out of their own land, and were thereby forced to learn and use a language somewhat different from their own; another absolutely it was not, yet so far did it differ from it that those who knew and spoke the one commonly could not understand the other, 2 Kings xviii. 26. This was לְשׁוֹן כַּשְׂדִּים, Dan. i. 4, "The language of the Chaldeans," which Daniel and others learned. But, by the people's long continuance in that country, it became common to them all. After this some parts of the books of the Scripture, as of Daniel and Ezra, were written in that language, as also *one* verse in the prophecy of Jeremiah, when they were ready to be carried thither, in which he instructs the people how to reproach the idols of the nations in their own language, Jer. x. 11. The design of God was, that his word should be always read and used in that language which was commonly understood by them unto whom he granted the privilege thereof; nor could any of the ends of his wisdom and goodness in that merciful grant be otherwise attained.

The prodigious conceit of *keeping the Scripture*, which is the foundation-rule and guide of the whole church, the spiritual food and means of life unto all the members of it, by the *church*, or those who

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pretend themselves intrusted with the power and rights of it, in a *language unknown* unto the community of the people, had not then befallen the minds of men, no more than it hath yet any countenance given unto it by the authority of God or reason of mankind. And, indeed, the advancement and defence of this imagination is one of those things which sets me at liberty from being influenced by the *authority* of any sort of men in matters of religion; for what will not their confidence undertake to vent, and their *sophistical* ability give countenance unto or wrangle about, which their interest requires and calls for at their hands, who can openly plead and contend for the truth of such an absurd and irrational assertion, as is contrary to all that we know of God and his will, and to all that we understand of ourselves or our duty with respect thereunto?

When the New Testament was to be written, the church was to be diffused throughout the world amongst people of all tongues and languages under heaven; yet there was a necessity that it should be written in *some one certain language*, wherein the sacred truth of it might, as in original records, be safely laid up and deposited. It was left by the Holy Ghost as παραθήκη, καλὴ παραθήκη, "a good and sacred *depositum*" unto the ministry of the church, to be kept inviolate, 1 Tim. vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 14. And it was disposed into writing in *one certain language;* whereon the preservation of it in purity was committed to the ministry of all ages, not absolutely, but under his care and inspection. From this *one language* God had ordained that it should be derived, by the care of the ministry, unto the knowledge and use of all nations and people; and this was represented by the *miraculous gift of tongues* communicated by the Holy Ghost unto the first-designed publishers of the gospel. In this case it pleased the wisdom of the Holy Ghost to make use of the Greek language, wherein he writ the whole New Testament originally; for the report, that the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews were first written in Hebrew, is altogether groundless, and I have elsewhere disproved it.

Now, this language at that season, through all sorts of advantages, was diffused throughout the world, especially in those parts of it where God had designed to fix the first and principal station of the church. For the eastern parts of the world, it was long before carried into them, and its use imposed on them by the Macedonian arms and laws, with the establishment of the Grecian empire for sundry ages among them. And some while before, in the western parts of the world, the same language was greatly inquired into and generally received, on account of the *wisdom* and *learning* which was treasured up therein, in the writings of poets, philosophers, and historians, which had newly received a peculiar advancement.

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For two things fell out in the providence of God about that season, which greatly conduced unto the furtherance of the gospel. The Jews were wholly possessed of whatever was *true* in religion, and which lay in a direct subserviency unto the gospel itself. This they gloried in and boasted of, as a privilege which they enjoyed above all the world. The Grecians, on the other hand, were possessed of skill and wisdom in all arts and sciences, with the products of *philosophical inquiries*, and elegancy of speech in expressing the conceptions of their minds; and this they gloried in and boasted of above all other people in the world. Now, both these nations being dispossessed of their empire, sovereignty, and liberty at home, by the Romans, multitudes of them made it their business to disperse themselves in the world, and to seek, as it were, a new empire; the one to its religion, and the other to its language, arts, and sciences. Of both sorts, with their design, the Roman writers in those days do take notice, and greatly complain. And these privileges being boasted of and rested in, proved equally prejudicial to both nations, as to the *reception of the gospel*, as our apostle disputes at large, 1 Cor. i., ii. But through the wisdom of God, disposing and ordering all things unto his own glory, the design and actings of them both became an effectual means to *facilitate* the propagation of the gospel; for the Jews having planted synagogues in most nations and principal cities in the Roman empire, they had both leavened multitudes of people with some knowledge of the true God, which prepared the way of the gospel, as also they had gathered *fixed assemblies*, which the preachers of the gospel constantly took the advantage of to enter upon their work and to begin the declaration of their message. The Grecians, on the other hand, had so universally diffused the knowledge of their language as that the use of that one tongue alone was sufficient to instruct all sorts of people throughout the world in the knowledge of the truth; for the *gift of tongues* was only to be a "sign unto unbelievers," 1 Cor. xiv. 22, and not a means of preaching the gospel constantly in a language which he understood not who spake.

In this language, therefore, as the most common, diffusive, and generally-understood in the world, did God order that the books of the New Testament should be written. From thence, by translations and expositions, was it to be derived into other tongues and languages; for the design of God was still the same,—that his word should be declared unto the church in a language which it understood. Hence is that peculiar distribution of the nations of the world into Jews, Greeks, Barbarians, and Scythians, Col. iii. 11, not accommodated unto the use of those terms in Grecian writers, unto whom the Jews were no less barbarians than the Scythians themselves; but as the Scriptures of the Old Testament were peculiarly

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given unto the Jews, so were those of the New unto the Greeks,—that is, those who made use of their language,—from whence it was deduced unto all other nations, called Barbarians and Scythians.

It must be acknowledged that the Scripture, as written in these languages, is accompanied with many and great advantages:—

(1.) In them peculiarly is it γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, a "writing by divine inspiration," 2 Tim. iii. 16; and סֵפֶר יְהוָה, the "book of writing of the LORD," Isa. xxxiv. 16; with a singular privilege above all translations. Hence the very words themselves, as therein used and placed, are *sacred, consecrated by God* unto that holy use. The *sacred sense*, indeed, of the words and expressions is the *internum formale sacrum*, or that wherein the holiness of the Scripture doth consist; but the *writing itself* in the original languages, in the words chosen and used by the Holy Ghost, is the *externum formale* of the holy Scripture, and is *materially sacred*.

It is the sense, therefore, of the Scripture which principally and for its own sake we inquire after and into; that divine sense which, as Justin Martyr speaks, is ὑπὲρ λόγον, ὑπὲρ νοῦν, καὶ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν κατάληψιν, absolutely "above our natural reason, understanding, and comprehension." In the *words* we are concerned with respect thereunto, as by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost they are designed as the written signs thereof.

(2.) The *words of the Scripture* being given thus immediately from God, every apex, tittle, or iota in the whole is considerable, as that which is an effect of divine wisdom, and therefore filled with sacred truth, according to their place and measure. Hence they are all under the especial care of God, according to that promise of our Saviour, Matt. v. 18, "Verily I say unto you," Ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰῶτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." That our Saviour doth here intend the *writing of the Scriptures* then in use in the church, and assure the protection of God unto the least letter, vowel, or point of it, I have proved elsewhere; and himself in due time will reprove the profane boldness of them who, without evidence or sufficient proof, without that respect and reverence which is due unto the interest, care, providence, and faithfulness of God in this matter, do assert *manifold changes* to have been made in the original writings of the Scripture.[1]

But, as I said, divine senses and singular mysteries may be couch-

[1] These statements are founded on those views respecting the functions and tendency of biblical criticism in which, by universal admission, Owen, in common with most theologians of his age, altogether erred. We need not consider his opinions on the subject under the incidental reference to them above. He refers to his writings

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ed in the use and disposal of a *letter;* and this God himself hath manifested, as in sundry other instances, so in the change of the names of Abram and Sarai, wherein the addition or alteration of one letter carried along with it a mysterious signification for the use of the church in all ages. In translations nothing of that nature can be observed; and hence a due consideration of the very *accents* in the original of the Old Testament, as *distinctive* or *conjunctive*, is a singular advantage in the investigation of the sense of particular places and sentences.

(3.) There is in the originals of the Scripture a peculiar *emphasis* of words and expressions, and in them an especial *energy*, to intimate and insinuate the sense of the Holy Ghost unto the minds of men, which cannot be traduced into other languages by translations, so as to obtain the same power and efficacy. Now, this is not absolutely from the nature of the *original languages* themselves, especially not of the Greek, whose principal advantages and excellencies, in *copiousness* and *elegancy*, are little used in the New Testament, but from a secret impression of *divine wisdom and efficacy* accompanying the immediate delivery of the mind of God in them. There is, therefore, no small advantage hence to be obtained in the interpretation of the Scripture: for when we have received an impression on our minds of the sense and intention of the Holy Ghost in any particular place, we shall seek for meet words to express it by, wherein consists the whole work of Scripture exposition, so far as I have any acquaintance with it,—"Interpretis officium est, non quid ipse velit, sed quid sentiat ille quem interpretatur, exponere," Hieron. Apol. adv. Rufin.;—for when the mind is really affected with the discovery of truth itself, it will be guided and directed in the declaration of it unto others.

(4.) The whole course of speech, especially in the New Testament, is accommodated unto the nature, use, and propriety of that language, as expressed in other authors who wrote therein, and had a perfect understanding of it. From them, therefore, is the proper use and sense of the words, phrases, and expressions in the New Testament much to be learned. This no man can make a judgment of

in controversy with Brian Walton; for which see vol. xvi. of his works. His argument proceeds on the supposition that, by a continuous miracle, extending over ages, every point and letter of Scripture have been indubitably preserved as they came from the inspired penmen. But it is a necessary condition of the argument, that what he alleges or assumes respecting the miraculous preservation of all the letters and words of Scripture should be true. If it be not true, and if there be really higher evidence for the peculiar claims of the Word in the fact that, with the common liabilities of all manuscripts to corruption, it exists in such accuracy and perfection, greater reverence is shown to it in critical efforts to weed out all remaining errata by the collation of manuscripts, than by slothful acquiescence in the text, without any attempt to ascertain on what authority it must be received as the actual text of inspiration.—Ed.

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in a due manner but he that is *skilled* in that language, as used and delivered by them. Not that I think a *commentary* on the New Testament may be collected out of Eustathius, Hesychius, Phavorinus, Julius Pollux, and other glossaries, from whose *grammaticisms* and *vocabularies* some do countenance themselves in curious and bold conjectures, nor from the likeness of expression in *classic* authors. This only I say, that it is of singular advantage, in the interpretation of the Scripture, that a man be well acquainted with the *original languages*, and be able to examine the use and signification of words, phrases, and expressions as they are applied and declared in other authors. And even to the understanding of the Greek of the New Testament it is necessary that a man have an acquaintance with the Hebrew of the Old; for although I do not judge that there are such a number of *Hebraisms* in it,—in a supposed discovery whereof consists no small part of some men's *critical observations*,—yet I readily grant that there is such a *cognation* and *alliance* in and between the senses of the one and the other as that a due comparing of their expressions doth mutually contribute light and perspicuity unto them.

By these things great advantage may be obtained unto the right understanding of the sense of the Scripture, or the mind of the Holy Ghost therein; for there is no other sense in it than what is contained in the words whereof *materially* it doth consist, though really that sense itself be such as our minds cannot receive without the especial divine assistance before pleaded. And in the interpretation of the mind of any one, it is necessary that the *words* he speaks or writes be rightly understood; and this we cannot do immediately unless we understand the *language* wherein he speaks, as also the *idiotisms* of that language, with the common use and intention of its *phraseology* and expressions. And if we do not hereby come unto a perfect comprehension of the sense intended, because many other things are required thereunto, yet a hinderance is removed, without which we cannot do so; occasions of manifold mistakes are taken away, and the cabinet is as it were unlocked wherein the jewel of truth lies hid, which with a lawful diligent search may be found. And what perplexities, mistakes, and errors, the ignorance of these *original languages* hath cast many expositors into, both of old and of late, especially among those who pertinaciously adhere unto *one translation*, and that none of the best, might be manifested by instances undeniable, and these without number. Such is that of the gloss on Tit. iii. 10, "Hæreticum hominem de vita," which adds, as its exposition, "tolle." And those among ourselves who are less skilled in this knowledge are to be advised that they would be careful not to adventure on any *singular exposition of the Scriptures*,

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or any *text* in them, upon the credit of any one or all translations they can make use of, seeing persons of greater name and worth than to be mentioned unto their disreputation have miscarried upon the same account. A reverential subjection of mind, and diligent attendance unto the *analogy of faith*, are their best preservative in this matter; and I fear not to add, that a *superficial knowledge in these tongues*, which many aim at, is of little use unless it be to make men *adventurous* in betraying their own ignorance. But the sense and substance of the Scripture being contained entirely in every *good translation* (amongst which that in use among ourselves is *excellent*, though capable of great improvements), men may, by the use of the means before directed unto, and under the conduct of the teaching of the Spirit of God in them, usefully and rightly expound the Scripture in general unto the edification of others; whereof many instances may be given amongst ancient and modern expositors.

This *skill and knowledge*, therefore, is of great use unto them who are called unto the interpretation of the Scripture; and the church of God hath had no small advantage by the endeavours of men *learned* herein, who have exercised it in the exposition of the words and *phraseology* of the Scriptures, as compared with their use in other authors. But yet, as was before observed, this skill, and the exercise of it in the way mentioned, is no *duty* in itself, nor enjoined unto any for its own sake, but only hath a *goodness* in it with respect unto a certain end. Wherefore, it is in its own nature *indifferent*, and in its utmost improvement capable of *abuse*, and such in late days it hath fallen under unto a great extremity; for the study of the *original languages*, and the exercise of skill in them in the interpretation of the Scripture, hath been of great reputation, and that deservedly. Hence multitudes of learned men have engaged themselves in that work and study, and the number of *annotations* and *comments* on the Scripture, consisting principally in *critical observations*, as they are called, have been greatly increased; and they are utter strangers unto these things who will not allow that many of them are of singular use. But withal this skill and faculty, where it hath been unaccompanied with that humility, sobriety, reverence of the Author of the Scripture, and respect unto the *analogy of faith*, which ought to bear sway in the minds of all men who undertake to expound the oracles of God, may be, and hath been, greatly abused, unto the hurt of its owners and disadvantage of the church. For,—

[1.] By some it hath been turned into the fuel of pride, and a noisome elation of mind; yea, experience shows that this kind of knowledge, where it is supposed signal, is of all others the most apt to puff up and swell the vain minds of men, unless it be where it is alloyed with a singular modesty of nature, or the mind itself be suffi-

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ciently corrected and changed by grace. Hence the expressions of pride and self-conceit which some have broken forth into on an imagination of their skill and faculty in criticising on the Scriptures have been ridiculous and impious. The Holy Ghost usually teacheth not such persons, neither should I expect to learn much from them relating unto the truth as it is in Jesus. But yet the stones they dig may be made use of by a skilful builder.

[2.] In many it hath been accompanied with a noxious, *profane curiosity*. Every tittle and apex shall give them occasion for *fruitless conjectures*, as vain, for the most part, as those of the cabalistical Jews. And this humour hath filled us with *needless* and *futilous* observations; which, beyond an ostentation of the learning of their authors (indeed, the utmost end whereunto they are designed), are of no use nor consideration. But this is not all: some men from hence have been prompted unto a boldness in adventuring to *corrupt the text* itself, or the plain sense of it; for what else is done when men, for an ostentation of their skill, will produce quotations out of *learned authors* to illustrate or expound sayings in the Scripture, wherein there seems to be some kind of compliance in words and sounds, when their senses are adverse and contrary? Amongst a thousand instances which might be given to exemplify this folly and confidence, we need take that one alone of him who, to explain or illustrate that saying of Hezekiah, "Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken, for there shall be peace and truth in my days," Isa. xxxix. 8, subjoins, Ἐμοῦ ζῶντος γαῖα μιχθήτω πυρί· so comparing that holy man's submission and satisfaction in the peace of the church and truth with the *blasphemous imprecation* of an impious wretch for confusion on the world when once he should be got out of it. And such notable sayings are many of our *late critics* farced withal.

And the confidence of some hath fallen into greater excesses, and hath swelled over these bounds also. To countenance their conjectures and self-pleasing imaginations, from whence they expect no small reputation for skill and learning, they fall in *upon the text* itself. And, indeed, we are come into an age wherein many seem to judge that they can neither sufficiently value themselves, nor obtain an estimation in the world, without some bold sallies of *curiosity* or *novelty* into the vitals of religion, with reflection of contempt and scorn on all that are otherwise minded, as persons incapable of comprehending their attainments. Hence it is that amongst ourselves we have scarce any thing left *unattacked* in the doctrine of the reformed churches and of that in England, as in former days. Neither shall he be with many esteemed a man either of parts, learning, or judgment, who hath not some *new curious opinion* or *speculation*,

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differing from what hath been formerly commonly taught and received, although the universality of these renowned notions among us are but corrupt emanations from *Socinianism* or *Arminianism* on the one hand, or from *Popery* on the other.

But it is men of another sort, and in truth of another manner of learning, than the present corrupters of the doctrines of the gospel (who, so far as I can perceive, trouble not themselves about the Scripture much one way or another), that we treat about. They are such as, in the exercise of the skill and ability under consideration, do fall in upon the Scripture itself, to make way for the advancement of their own conjectures,—whereof *ten thousand* are not of the least importance compared with the duty and necessity of preserving the sacred text inviolate, and the just and due persuasion that so it hath been preserved; for, first, they command the *vowels and accents* of the Hebrew text out of their way, as things wherein they are not concerned, when the use of them in any one page of the Scripture is *incomparably* of more worth and use than all that they are or ever will be of in the church of God. And this is done on slight *conjectures*. And if this suffice not to make way for their designs, then *letters and words* themselves must be corrected, upon an unprovable supposition that the *original text hath been changed or corrupted*. And the boldness of some herein is grown intolerable, so that it is as likely means for the introduction and promotion of *atheism* as any engine the devil hath set on work in these days, wherein he is so openly engaged in that design.

There are also sundry other ways whereby this great help unto the understanding and interpretation of the Scripture may be and hath been abused; those mentioned may suffice as instances confirming our observations. Wherefore, as *substantial* knowledge and skill in the *originals* is useful, and indeed necessary, unto him that is called unto the exposition of the Scripture, so in the use and exercise of it sundry things ought to be well considered by them who are furnished therewithal: as,—1*st*. That the thing itself is *no grace*, nor any peculiar *gift* of the Holy Ghost, but a mere *fruit of diligence* upon a common furniture with natural abilities; and nothing of this nature is in sacred things to be rested on or much trusted unto. 2*dly*. That the *exercise of this skill* in and about the Scripture is not in itself, as such, an *especial or immediate duty*. Were it so, there would be *especial grace promised* to fill it up and quicken it; for all *gospel duties* are animated by grace in their due performance, —that is, those who do so perform them have especial assistance in their so doing. But it is reduced unto the general head of duty with respect unto the end aimed at. Wherefore, 3*dly*. The *blessing of God* on our endeavours, succeeding and prospering of them,

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as in other natural and civil occasions of life, is all that we expect herein from the Holy Spirit. And, *4thly.* Sundry other things are required of us, if we hope for this blessing on just grounds. It may be some ignorant persons are so fond as to imagine that if they could understand the *original languages*, they must of necessity understand the sense of the Scripture; and there is nothing more frequent than for some, who either truly or falsely pretend a skill in them, to bear themselves high against those who perhaps are really more acquainted with the mind of the Holy Ghost in the word than themselves, as though *all things were plain and obvious unto them*, others knowing nothing but by them or such as they are. But this is but one means of many that is useful to this purpose, and that such as, if it be alone, is of little or no use at all. It is fervent prayer, humility, lowliness of mind, godly fear and reverence of the word, and subjection of conscience unto the authority of every tittle of it, a constant attendance unto the *analogy of faith*, with due dependence on the Spirit of God for supplies of light and grace, which must make this or any other means of the same nature effectual.

2. An acquaintance with the *history and geography of the world* and with *chronology*, I reckon also among *disciplinarian* aids in the interpretation of the Scripture; for as time is divided into what is past and what is to come, so there are sundry things in the Scripture which, in all seasons, relate thereunto: for,—(1.) God hath therein given us an account of the course and order of all things (which the Jews call סדר עלם), from the foundation of the world. And this he did for sundry important reasons, as incident with the general end of the Scripture; for hereby hath he secured the testimony that he hath given to his being, power, and providence, by the *creation* and rule of all things. The evidences in them given thereunto are those which are principally attacked by atheists. And although they do sufficiently manifest and evince their own testimony unto the common reason of mankind, yet sundry things relating unto them are so involved in darkness and inextricable circumstances as that, if all their concernments had not been plainly declared in the Scripture, the wisest of men had been at a great loss about them; and so were they always who wanted the light and advantage hereof. But here, as he hath plainly declared the *original emanation* of all things from his eternal power, so hath he testified unto his constant rule over all in all times, places, ages, and seasons, by instances incontrollable. Therein hath he treasured up all sorts of examples, with such impressions of his goodness, patience, power, wisdom, holiness, and righteousness upon them, as proclaim his almighty and righteous government of the whole universe; and in the whole he hath de-

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livered unto us such a *tract and series of the ages of the world* from its beginning as *atheism* hath no tolerable pretence, from tradition, testimony, or the evidence of things themselves, to break in upon. Whatever is objected against the beginning of all things, and the course of their continuance in the world, delivered unto us in the Scripture, which is secured not only by the authority of divine revelation, but also by a universal evidence of all circumstances, is fond and ridiculous. I speak of the account given us in general, sufficient unto its own ends, and not of any men's *deductions* and applications of it unto minute portions of time, which probably it was not designed unto. It is sufficient unto its end that its account, in general, which confounds all *atheistical* presumptions, is not to be impeached. And although the authority of the Scripture is not to be pleaded immediately against *atheists*, yet the matter and reason of it is, which from its own evidence renders all contrary pretensions contemptible.

(2.) God hath hereby given an account of the *beginning, progress, trials, faith, obedience*, and whole proceedings of the church, in the pursuit of the first promise, unto the actual exhibition of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Hereunto were all things in a tendency for four thousand years. It is a glorious prospect we have therein, to see the call and foundation of the church in the first promise given unto our common parents; what additions of light and knowledge he granted unto it successively by new revelations and promises; how he gradually adorned it with gifts, privileges, and ordinances; what ways and means he used to preserve it in faith, purity, and obedience; how he chastened, tried, punished, and delivered it; how he dealt with the nations of the world with respect unto it, raising them up for its affliction, and destroying them for their cruelty and oppression of it; what were the ways of wicked and sinful men amongst them or in it, and what the graces and fruits of his saints; how by his power he retrieved it out of various calamities, and preserved it against all opposition unto its appointed season;—all which, with innumerable other effects of divine wisdom and grace, are blessedly represented unto us therein.

Now, besides that spiritual wisdom and insight into the great design of God in Christ, which is required unto a right understanding in these things as they were types of better things to come and examples of gospel mysteries, there is a skill and understanding in the records and monuments of time, the geographical respect of one nation unto another, the periods and revolutions of seasons and ages, required to apprehend them aright in their first literal instance and intention. And besides what is thus historically related in the Scripture, there are prophecies also of things to come in the church and amongst the nations of the world, which are great evidences of its

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own divinity and supporting arguments of our faith; but without some good apprehension of the *distinction of times, seasons,* and *places,* no man can rightly judge of their accomplishment.

Secondly, there are, in particular, prophecies in the Old Testament which reach unto the times of the gospel, upon the truth whereof the whole Scripture doth depend. Such are those concerning the calling of the Gentiles, the rejection and recovery of the Jews, the erection of the glorious kingdom of Christ in the world, with the oppositions that should be made unto it. And to these many are added in the New Testament itself, as Matt. xxiv., xxv., 2 Thess. ii. 1–12, 1 Tim. iv. 1–3, 2 Tim. iii. 1–5, iv. 3, 4; but especially in the whole book of the Revelation, wherein the state of the church and of the world is foretold unto the consummation of all things. And how can any man arrive unto a tolerable acquaintance with the *accomplishment of these prophecies* as to what is already past, or have a distinct grounded expectation of the fulfilling of what remains foretold, without a prospect into the state of things in the world, the revolutions of times past, with what fell out in them, which are the things spoken of? Those who treat of them without it do but feign *chimeras* to themselves, as men in the dark are apt to do, or corrupt the word of God, by turning it into senseless and fulsome *allegories.* And those, on the other side, by whom these things are wholly *neglected* do despise the wisdom and care of God towards the church, and disregard a blessed means of our faith and consolation.

Some things of this nature, especially such as relate unto *chronological computations,* I acknowledge are attended with great and apparently inextricable difficulties; but the skill and knowledge mentioned will guide humble and modest inquirers into so sufficient a satisfaction in general, and as unto all things which are really useful, that they shall have no temptation to question the verity of what in particular they cannot assoil. And it is an *intolerable pride and folly,* when we are guided and satisfied infallibly in a thousand things which we know no otherwise, to question the authority of the whole because we cannot comprehend one or two particulars, which, perhaps, were never intended to be reduced unto our measure. Besides, as the investigation of these things is attended with difficulties, so the ignorance of them or mistakes about them, whilst the minds of men are free from pertinacy and a spirit of contention, are of no great *disadvantage,* for they have very little influence on our faith and obedience, any otherwise than that we call not into question what is revealed; and it is most probable that the Scripture never intended to give us such *minute chronological determinations* as some would deduce their computations unto, and that because not necessary. Hence we see that some who have laboured therein unto

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a *prodigy of industry* and learning, although they have made some useful discoveries, yet have never been able to give such evidence unto their *computations* as that others would acquiesce in them, but by all their endeavours have administered occasion of *new strife* and contention about things, it may be, of no great importance to be known or determined. And, in general, men have run into two extremes in these things; for some pretend to frame an *exact computation* and *consent of times* from the Scripture alone, without any regard unto the records, monuments, histories, and signatures of times in the world. Wherever these appear in opposition or contradiction unto the *chain* and *links* of time which they have framed to themselves (as they suppose from the Scripture), they reject them as matters of no consideration; and it were well if they could do this unto satisfaction. But how evidently they have failed herein,—as, for instance, in the computation of *Daniel's weeks*, wherein they will allow but four hundred and ninety years from the *first of Cyrus unto the death of our Saviour*, contrary to the common consent of mankind about things that fell out, and their continuance between those seasons, taking up five hundred and sixty-two years,—is manifest unto all. The Scripture, indeed, is to be made the only *sacred standard* and measure of things, in its proper sense and understanding, nor is any thing to be esteemed of which riseth up in contradiction thereunto; but as a due consideration of *foreign testimonies* and monuments doth ofttimes give great light unto what is more generally or obscurely expressed in the Scripture, so where the Scripture in these things, with such allowances as it everywhere declares itself to admit of, may be interpreted in a fair compliance with *uncontrolled foreign testimonies*, that interpretation is to be embraced. The question is not, therefore, whether we shall regulate the computation of times by the Scripture, or by the histories and marks of time in the world; but whether, when the sense of the Scripture is *obscure* in those things, and its determination only general, so as to be equally capable of various senses, that is not to be preferred which agrees with the *undoubted monuments* of times in the nations of the world, all other things being alike? For instance, the angel Gabriel acquaints Daniel that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah the prince and his cutting off, should be *seventy weeks* (to speak only of the whole number in general),—that is, *four hundred and ninety years*. Now, there were sundry commandments given or decrees made by the kings of Persia, who are intended, to this purpose. Of these two were the most famous, the one granted by Cyrus in the *first year of his empire*, Ezra i. 1–4; the other by Artaxerxes in the *seventh year of his reign*, chap. vii. 11–26. Between the first of these and the

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death of Christ there must be allowed five hundred and sixty-two years, unless you will offer violence unto all monuments, records, and circumstances of times in the world. It is, therefore, safer to interpret the general words of the angel of the *latter decree* or commandment, whose circumstances also make it more probable to be intended, wherein the space of time mentioned falls in exactly with other approved *histories* and records. Neither would I disallow another computation, which, contending for the first decree of Cyrus to be the beginning of the time mentioned, and allowing the whole space from thence to be really five hundred and sixty-two years, affirms that the Scripture excludes the consideration of the years *supernumerary* to the four hundred and ninety, because of the interruptions which at several seasons were put upon the people in the accomplishment of the things foretold for so many years, which some suppose to be signified by the distribution of the whole number of *seventy weeks* into *seven, sixty-two, and one*, each of which fractions hath its proper work belonging unto it; for this computation offers no *violence* either to sacred or unquestionable human authority.

But, on the other extreme, some there are who, observing the difficulties in these accounts, as expressed in the Scripture from the beginning, having framed another *series of things* to themselves openly diverse from that exhibited therein, and raked together from other authors some things giving countenance unto their conjectures, do profanely make bold to break in upon the *original text*, accusing it of *imperfection* or *corruption*, which they will rectify by their *fine inventions* and by the aid of a *translation* known to be mistaken in a *thousand places*, and in some justly suspected of wilful depravation. But this presumptuous confidence is nothing but an emanation from that *flood of atheism* which is breaking in on the world in these declining ages of it.

3. The third aid or assistance of this kind is a skill in the *ways and methods of reasoning*, which are supposed to be common unto the Scriptures with other writings; and this, as it is an *art*, or an *artificial faculty*, like those other means before mentioned, is capable of a right improvement or of being abused. An *ability to judge of the sense of propositions*, how one thing depends on another, how it is deduced from it, follows upon it, or is proved by it; what is the design of him that writes or speaks in any discourse or reasoning; how it is proposed, confirmed, illustrated,—is necessary unto any rational consideration to be exercised about whatever is so proposed unto us. And when the minds of men are confirmed in a good *habit of judgment by the rules of the art of reasoning* about the ordinary ways and methods of it, it is of great advantage in the *investigation of the sense* of any writer, even of the Scripture itself; and those

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ordinarily who shall undertake the interpretation of any *series of Scripture* discourses without some ability in this science will find themselves oftentimes *entangled* and at a loss, when by virtue of it they might be at liberty and free. And many of the *rules* which are commonly given about the interpretation of the Scripture,—as, namely, that the *scope* of the *author* in the place is duly to be considered, as also things *antecedent* and *consequent* to the place and words to be interpreted, and the like,—are but directions for the due use of this *skill* or faculty.

But this also must be admitted with its limitations; for whatever perfection there seems to be in our art of reasoning, it is to be subject to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture. His way of reasoning is always his own, sometimes *sublime* and *heavenly*, so as not to be reduced unto the common rules of our arts and sciences, without a derogation from its *instructive*, *convictive*, and *persuasive* efficacy. For us to frame unto ourselves *rules of ratiocination*, or to have our minds embondaged unto those of other men's invention and observation, if we think thereon absolutely to reduce all the reasonings in the Scripture unto them, we may fall into a presumptuous mistake. In the consideration of all the effects of infinite wisdom, there must be an allowance for the deficiency of our comprehension; when humble subjection of conscience, and the captivating of our understandings to the obedience of faith, is the best means of learning what is proposed unto us. And there is nothing more contemptible than the *arrogancy* of such persons as think, by the shallow measures and short lines of their own weak, dark, imperfect reasoning, to fathom the depths of Scripture senses.

Again; what sense soever any man supposeth or judgeth this or that particular place of Scripture to yield and give out to the best of his rational intelligence is immediately to give place unto the *analogy of faith*,—that is, the Scripture's own declaration of its sense in other places to another purpose, or contrary thereunto. The want of attending unto men's duty herein, with a *mixture of pride and pertinacy*, is the occasion of most errors and noxious opinions in the world; for when some have taken up a *private interpretation* of any place of Scripture, if, before they have thoroughly imbibed and vented it, they do not submit their conception, although they seem to be greatly satisfied in it and full of it, unto the authority of the Scripture in the declaration of its own mind in other places, there is but small hope of their recovery. And this is that pride which is the source and original of *heresy*,—namely, when men will prefer their *seemingly wise* and rational conceptions of the sense of *particular places* before the *analogy of faith*.

Moreover, there is a pernicious mistake that some are fallen into

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about these things. They suppose that, taking in the help of *skill in the original languages* for the understanding of the words and their use, whether proper or figurative, there is nothing more necessary to the understanding and interpretation of the Scripture but only *the sedulous and diligent use of our own reason*, in the ordinary way, and according to the common rules of the *art of ratiocination;* "for what more can be required," say they, "or what more can men make use of? By these means alone do we come to understand the meaning of any other *writer*, and therefore also of the Scripture. Neither can we, nor doth God require that we should, receive or believe any thing but according to our own reason and understanding." But these things, though in themselves they are, some of them, partly true, yet as they are used unto the end mentioned, they are perniciously false; for,—(1.) It greatly unbecometh any Christian once to suppose that there is need *of no other assistance*, nor the use of any other means for the interpretation of the oracles of God, or to come unto the understanding of the hidden wisdom of God in the mystery of the gospel, than is to the understanding or interpretation of the writings of men, which are the product of a finite, limited, and weak ability. Were it not for some secret persuasion that the Scripture indeed is not, what it pretends to be, *the word of the living God*, or that it doth not indeed express the *highest effect of his wisdom* and deepest counsel of his will, it could not be that men should give way to such foolish imaginations. The principal matter of the Scripture is *mysterious*, and the mysteries of it are laid up therein by God himself, and that in a way *inimitable* by the skill or wisdom of men. When we speak of and express the same things according unto our measure of comprehension, wherein, from its agreement with the Scripture, what we say is *materially* divine, yet our words are not so, nor is there the same respect to the things themselves as the expressions of the Scripture have, which are *formally* divine. And can we ourselves trace these paths of wisdom without his especial guidance and assistance?—it is highly *atheistical* once to fancy it. (2.) We treat of such an interpretation of the Scripture as is *real*, and is accompanied with an understanding of the things proposed and expressed, and not merely of the *notional sense of propositions and expressions;* for we speak of such an interpretation of the Scripture as is a sanctified means of our *illumination*, nor any other doth either the Scripture require or God regard. That to give in this unto us, notwithstanding the use and advantage of all outward helps and means, is the peculiar work of the Spirit of God, hath been before demonstrated. It is true, we can receive nothing, reject nothing, as to what is true or false, nor conceive the sense of any thing, but by

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our own *reasons* and *understandings*. But the inquiry herein is, what *supernatural aid and assistance* our minds and natural reasons stand in need of to enable them to receive and understand aright things spiritual and supernatural. And if it be true that no more is required unto the due understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures but the exercise of our *own reasons*, in and by the helps mentioned,—namely, *skill in the original languages, the art of ratiocination*, and the like, which are exposed unto all in common, according to the measure of their natural abilities and diligence,—then is the sense of the Scripture, that is, the mind of God and Christ therein, *equally discernible*, or to be attained unto, by all sorts of men, good and bad, holy and profane, believers and unbelievers, those who obey the word and those who despise it; which is contrary to all the promises of God and to innumerable other testimonies of Scripture.

CHAPTER IX.

Helps ecclesiastical in the interpretation of the Scripture.

THIRDLY, There are means and helps for the interpretation of the Scripture which I call *ecclesiastical*. Those I intend which we are supplied withal by the *ministry of the church* in all ages. And they may be referred unto three heads, under which their usefulness to this purpose is pleaded: as,—1. *Catholic or universal tradition;* 2. *Consent of the fathers;* 3. *The endeavours of any persons holy and learned* who have gone before us in the investigation of the truth, and expressed their minds in writing, for the edification of others, whether of *old* or of *late*. These things belong unto the ministry of the church, and so far as they do so are sanctified ordinances for the communication of the mind of God unto us.

1. It is pleaded by some that the Scripture is to be interpreted according to *catholic tradition*, and no otherwise. And I do acknowledge that we should be inexpressibly obliged to them who would give us an interpretation of the *whole Scripture*, or of *any book in the Scripture*, or of *any one passage in the Scripture*, relating unto things of mere supernatural revelation, according unto that *rule*, or by the guidance and direction of it. But I fear no such tradition can be evidenced, unless it be of things manifest in the light of nature, whose universal preservation is an effect of the unavoidable reason of mankind, and not of any *ecclesiastical* tradition. Moreover, the Scripture itself is testified unto unanimously and uninterruptedly by all Christians to be the word of God; and hereby are all divine truths conveyed down from their original and delivered

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unto us. But a *collateral tradition* of any one truth or doctrine besides, from Christ and the apostles, cannot be proved; and if it could be so, it would be no means of the interpretation of the Scripture but only *objectively*, as one place of Scripture interprets another, —that is, it would belong unto the *analogy of faith*, contrary to which, or in opposition whereunto, no place ought to be interpreted. To pretend this, therefore, to be the rule of the interpretation of Scripture *actively*, as though thereby we could certainly learn the meaning of it, in *part or in whole*, is fond. Nor, whatever some do boast of, can any man living prove his interpretation of any one place to be dictated by or to be suitable unto *universal tradition*, any otherwise but as he can prove it to be agreeable to the *Scripture* itself; unless we shall acknowledge, without proof, that what is the mind and sense of some men who call themselves "The church" at present was the mind of Christ and his apostles, and of all true believers since, and that infallibly it is so. But this pretence hath been abundantly and sufficiently disproved, though nothing seems to be so to the minds of men fortified against all evidences of truth by invincible prejudices.

2. The *joint consent of the fathers* or ancient doctors of the church is also pretended as a rule of Scripture interpretation. But those who make this *plea* are apparently influenced by their supposed interest so to do. No man of ingenuity who hath ever read or considered them, or any of them, with attention and judgment, can abide by this pretence; for it is utterly impossible they should be an *authentic rule* unto others who so disagree among themselves, as they will be found to do, not, it may be, so much in *articles of faith*, as in their *exposition of Scripture*, which is the matter under consideration. About the former they express themselves diversely; in the latter they *really differ*, and that frequently. Those who seem most earnestly to press this dogma upon us are those of the *church of Rome;* and yet it is hard to find one learned man among them who hath undertaken to expound or write *commentaries* on the Scripture, but on all occasions he gives us the different senses, expositions, and interpretations of the fathers, of the same places and texts, and that where any difficulty occurs in a manner perpetually. But the pretence of the *authoritative determination* of the *fathers* in points of religion hath been so disproved, and the vanity of it so fully discovered, as that it is altogether needless farther to insist upon it. And those who would seem to have found out a middle way, between their *determining authority* on the one hand, and the *efficacy* of their *reasons*, with a due veneration of their piety and ability (which all sober men allow), on the other, do but trifle, and speak words whose sense neither themselves nor any others do understand.

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3. We say, therefore, that the sole use of *ecclesiastical means* in the interpretation of the Scripture is in the due consideration and improvement of that *light, knowledge, and understanding* in, and those *gifts* for the declaration of, the mind of God in the Scripture, which he hath granted unto and furnished them withal who have gone before us in the *ministry* and work of the gospel; for as God in an especial manner, in all ages, took care that the doctrine of the gospel should be preached *vivâ voce*, to the present edification of the body of the church, so likewise, almost from the beginning of its propagation in the world, presently after the decease of the apostles and that whole divinely-inspired society of preachers and writers, he stirred up and enabled sundry persons to declare by *writing* what their apprehensions were, and what *understanding* God had given them in and about the sense of the Scripture. Of those who designedly wrote comments and expositions on any part of the Scripture, Origen was the first, whose fooleries and mistakes, occasioned by the prepossession of his mind with *platonical philosophy*, confidence of his own great abilities (which, indeed, were singular and admirable), with the curiosity of a speculative mind, discouraged not others from endeavouring with more sobriety and better success to write entire expositions on some parts of the Scripture: such among the Greeks were Chrysostom, Theodoret, Aretine, Œcumenius, Theophylact; and among the Latins, Jerome, Ambrose, Austin, and others. These have been followed, used, improved, by others innumerable, in succeeding ages. Especially since the Reformation hath the work been carried on with general success, and to the great advantage of the church; yet hath it not proceeded so far but that the best, most useful, and profitable labour in the Lord's vineyard, which any holy and learned man can engage himself in, is to endeavour the contribution of farther light in the opening and exposition of Scripture, or any part thereof.

Now, all these are singular helps and advantages unto the right understanding of the Scripture; of the same kind of advantage, as to that single end of light and knowledge, which preaching of the word is, used with sobriety, judgment, and a due examination of all by the text itself. [As] for the *exposition of the fathers*, as it is a ridiculous imagination, and that which would oblige us to the belief of contradictions and open mistakes, for any man to *authenticate* them so far as to bind us up unto an assent unto their conceptions and dictates because they are theirs; so they will not be despised by any but such as have not been conversant in them. And it is easy to discern from them all, by the diversity of their gifts, ways, and designs, in the exposition of Scripture, that the Holy Spirit divided unto them as he pleased; which as it should make us reverence his presence with them, and assistance of them,

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so it calls for the freedom of our own judgments to be exercised about their conceptions. And [as] for those of *latter* days, though the names of the principal and most eminent of them, as Bucer, Calvin, Martyr, Beza, are now condemned and despised by many, mostly by those who never once seriously attempted the exposition of any one chapter in the whole Scripture, yet those who firmly design to grow in the knowledge of God and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, both do and always will bless God for the assistance he gave them in their great and holy works, and in the benefit which they receive by their labours. These are the outward means and advantages which are requisite, and to be used as any one's calling, opportunity, ability, and work do require, as helps to attain a right understanding of the mind of God in the Scripture. Now, concerning them all I shall only say, that the Spirit of God makes them useful and prosperous according to the counsel of his own will. Some are prone in the use of them to lean unto their own understandings, and consequently to wander in and after the imaginations of their own minds, corrupting the word of God, and endeavouring to pervert his right ways thereby. Others he leaves in the *shell of the text*, to exercise their skill about words, phrases, and expressions, without leading them into the spiritual sense of the word, which is its life and power. In some he blesseth them to the full and proper end; but not unless they are in a compliance with the spiritual means and duties before insisted on.

From what hath been discoursed concerning the work of the Spirit of God in revealing unto believers the mind of God in the Scriptures, or the sense of that *revelation* made of it therein, two things will seem to follow,—First, That those who have not that *assistance* granted to them, or that work of his wrought in them, cannot understand or apprehend the truth or doctrine of faith and obedience therein revealed; for if that work of the Spirit be necessary thereunto, which they are not made partakers of, how can they come to any knowledge or understanding therein? Secondly, That those who are so influenced and guided *must understand the whole Scripture aright*, and be freed from all mistakes in their conceptions about the mind of God;—both which are contrary to the experience of all men in all ages, seeing many persons visibly destitute of any saving work of the Holy Ghost upon their minds, as is evident in that no renovation of them or reformation of life doth ensue thereon, have yet *attained a great acquaintance with the truth* as it is revealed in the word, and many who are *truly enlightened* and sanctified by him do yet fall into sundry *errors* and mistakes, which the differences and divisions among themselves do openly proclaim; and the Scripture itself supposeth that there may be *diversity of judg-*

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ment about spiritual things among those who are really sanctified and believers.

A brief answer unto both these exceptions will lead this discourse unto its close. I say, therefore, to the first:—1. That there are in the declaration of the mind of God in the Scriptures sundry things that are *common unto other writings*, both as to the matter of them and the manner of their delivery. Such are the *stories* of times past therein recorded, the *computation of times*, the use of words, *phrases of speech, figurative* and *proper*, *artificial* connections of discourse, *various sorts of arguments*, and the like; all which persons may come to the understanding of, and be able to make a right judgment concerning, without any especial assistance of the Holy Spirit, the things about which they are conversant being the proper object of the reasonable faculties of the mind, provided there be a common blessing on their endeavours and exercise. 2. The *main doctrines* of truth declared in the Scripture are proposed in such distinct, *plain enunciations*, in propositions accommodated unto the understandings of rational men, that persons who, in the use of *disciplinary* and *ecclesiastical helps*, attend unto the study of them without prejudice, or prepossession with false notions and opinions, with freedom from the bias of carnal and secular interests and advantages, and from the leaven of tradition, may learn, know, and understand the sense, meaning, and truth of the doctrines so proposed and declared unto them, without any especial work of *saving illumination* on their minds. The propositions of truth in the Scripture,—I mean those which are necessary unto the great ends of the Scripture,—are so plain and evident in themselves, that it is the fault and sin of all men endued with rational abilities if they perceive them not, and assent not unto them upon the evidence of their truth, or of the mind of God in those places of Scripture wherein they are declared; which is the substance of what we plead concerning the *perspicuity of the Scripture* against the *Papists*. 3. Considering the *natural vanity* of the mind of man, its proneness to error and false imaginations, the weakness of judgment wherewith it is in all things accompanied, whatever it attains in the knowledge of truth is to be ascribed unto the guidance of the Spirit of God, although not working in it or upon it by a communication of saving light and grace; for, 4. The knowledge of truth thus to be attained is not that *illumination* which we are inquiring after, nor doth it produce those effects of renewing the mind, and transforming it into the image of the things known, with the fruits of holy obedience, which are inseparable from saving illumination.

In answer unto the second pretended consequence of what we have discoursed, I say,—1. That the promise of the Spirit, and the

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communication of him accordingly, to *teach, instruct,* guide, and lead us into truth, is suited unto that *great end* for which God hath made the revelation of himself in his word,—namely, that we might live unto him here according to his will, and be brought unto the enjoyment of him hereafter unto his glory. 2. That unto this end it is not necessary that we should understand the *direct sense and meaning of every single text,* place, or passage in the Scripture, nor yet that we should obtain the knowledge of every thing revealed therein. It sufficeth, in answer to the promise and design of the work of the Holy Ghost, that the *knowledge of all truth necessary to be known unto that end be communicated unto us,* and that we have so far a right understanding of the sense of the Scripture as to learn that truth by the use of the means appointed unto that end. 3. We are not hereby *absolutely secured* from particular errors and mistakes, no more than we are from all actual sins by the work of the Spirit on our wills; that of both kinds, whilst we live in this world, being only in a tendency towards perfection. There is no faculty of our souls that is absolutely and perfectly renewed in this life. But as the *wills* of believers are so far renewed and changed by grace as to preserve them from *such sins* as are inconsistent with a holy life according to the tenor of the covenant, which yet leaves a possibility of many infirmities and actual sins; so their *minds* are so far renewed as to know and assent to all truths *necessary to our life of obedience* and a right understanding of the Scripture wherein they are revealed, which yet may be consistent with many mistakes, errors, and false apprehensions, unto our great damage and disadvantage. But withal this must be added, that, such are the teachings of the Spirit of God as to all divine truths whatever, both in the *objective revelation* of them in the word, and in the *assistance* he gives us by his light and grace to perceive and understand the mind and whole counsel of God in that revelation, it is not without our own *guilt,* as well as from our own *weakness,* that we fall into errors and misapprehensions about any Scripture proposals that concern our duty to God. And if all that believe would freely forego all prejudices or preconceived opinions, and cast off all impressions from worldly considerations and secular advantages, giving themselves up humbly and entirely to the teaching of God in the ways of his own appointment, some whereof have been before insisted on, we might "all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 13. And these things may suffice to illustrate the work of the Holy Ghost in our *illumination,* with respect unto the external objective cause thereof, or the holy Scripture itself.

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There is yet another work of the Holy Ghost with respect unto the Scripture, which although it fall not directly under the present consideration of the *ways and means of saving illumination*, yet the whole of what we have discoursed is so resolved into it, in the order of an external cause, as that it may justly claim a remembrance in this place; and this is, his *watchful care over the written word*, in preserving it from destruction and corruption, from the first writing of it unto this very day. That it hath been under the especial care of God, not only the event of its entire preservation, considering the opposition it hath been exposed unto, but also the testimony of our Saviour as to the *books of the Old Testament*, than which those of the New are certainly of no less esteem or use, do sufficiently evince: Matt. v. 18, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law." That by the *law* the whole writings of the Old Testament are intended, the context doth declare. And what he affirms, that it shall not by any means pass away,—that is, be abolished or corrupted,—that he taketh on himself to preserve and secure. Two things the Scripture in itself is subject unto:—1. *Destruction* or *abolition*, as unto the whole or any necessary part thereof. 2. *Corruption of the writing*, by changes, alterations, and falsifications of the copies of it. And by both of these it hath been attempted, and that both before and since the time of the promulgation of the gospel, the stories whereof are known; and yet is it come safe off from all, not only without *ruin*, but without *wound* or *blemish*. For any one to suppose that this hath been done by chance, or by the care of men alone, without the especial watchful providence and powerful actings of the Spirit of God, in the pursuit of the promise of Christ that it should not fail,—which expressed a care that God had taken on himself to make good from the beginning,—is not only to neglect the consideration of the nature of all human affairs, with the revolutions that they are subject unto, and the deceit and violence wherewith the Scriptures have been attacked, with the insufficiency of the powers and diligence employed for their preservation, but also to countenance the *atheistical notion* that God hath no especial regard to his word and worship in the world. Indeed, for a man to think and profess that the Scripture is the word of God, given unto men for the ends which itself declares, and of that use which it must be of in being so, and not believe that God hath always taken and doth take especial care of its preservation, and that in its purity and integrity, beyond the ordinary ways of his providence in the rule of all other things, is to be sottish and foolish, and to entertain thoughts of God, his goodness, wisdom, and power, infinitely unworthy of him and them. There have of late been some opinions concerning the *integrity and purity* of the Scriptures invented and

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maintained, that, I conceive, take off from the reverence of that relation which the Scripture hath, in its integrity and purity, unto the care and glory of God. Hence it is by some maintained that some books written by divine inspiration, and given out unto the church as part of its *canon*, or rule of faith and obedience, are utterly lost and perished; that the *law* and *Scripture* of the Old Testament before the *captivity* were written, though in the Hebrew *tongue* (which, they say, was not originally the language of Abraham, derived from Eber, but of the posterity of Ham in Canaan), yet not in the *letters* or *characters* which are now in use, but in those which a few wicked idolaters called Samaritans did use and possess, being left unto them by Ezra, and new characters invented by him, or borrowed from the Chaldeans for the use of the church; that the *vowels and accents*, whereby alone the true reading and sense of it is preserved, are a late invention of some Masoretical rabbins; and that the *original text* is in many places corrupted, so as that it may and ought to be corrected by translations, especially that of the LXX.; with sundry other such imaginations, which they countenance with uncertain conjectures and fabulous stories. And I cannot but wonder how some seem to take *shelter unto their opinions*, especially that of preferring the *translation of the LXX.* unto the original Hebrew text, or, as they fondly speak, "the present copy of it," in the church of England, whose *publicly authorized and excellent translation* takes no more notice of, nor hath any more regard unto that translation, when it differs from the Hebrew, as it doth in a thousand places, than if it had never been in the world. And as no translations are in common use in the whole world but what were immediately traduced out of the Hebrew original, excepting only *some part of the vulgar Latin*, so I verily believe that those very Christians who contend for a *preference* to be given unto that of the LXX., now they have got their ends, or at least attempted them, in procuring a reputation of learning, skill, and cunning, by their *writings about it*, would not dare to advise a translation out of that to be made and composed for the use of that church which they adhere unto, be it what it will, to the rejection and exclusion of that taken out of the original: and to have two recommended unto common use, so discrepant as they would be found to be, would certainly be of more disadvantage to the church than by all their endeavours otherwise they can compensate. Yea, I am apt to think that they will not be very urgent for an alteration to be made in the *church's translation* in those particular instances wherein they hope they have won themselves much reputation in proving the *mistakes of the Hebrew*, and manifesting how it may be rectified by the *translation* of the LXX.; for whatever thoughts may be in their minds concerning their

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learned disputes, I doubt not but they have more reverence of God and his word than to break in upon it with such a kind of violence, on any pretence whatsoever. As, therefore, the integrity and purity of the Scripture in the *original languages* may be proved and defended against all opposition, with whatever belongs thereunto, so we must ascribe their preservation to the watchful care and powerful operation of the Spirit of God absolutely securing them throughout all generations.

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A DISCOURSE

OF

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER;

WITH A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO

THE NATURE AND USE OF MENTAL PRAYER AND FORMS.

LONDON: 1682.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE preface to the following treatise is of some interest, as an earnest pleading against liturgical impositions, on four different grounds:—as having been instrumental in securing, at an early period, currency for the errors of the great apostasy; in introducing the gorgeous embellishments of carnal fancy into the pure worship of the Christian religion; in tempting ecclesiastical authorities to the employment of civil penalties in matters of faith; and in leading to the cessation of spiritual and ministerial gifts in the church. The treatise itself unfolds the evidence and nature of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in prayer, and would be esteemed meagre and incomplete if it were regarded as a treatise on the whole subject of prayer. To understand its precise scope, it must be considered simply as another book in the general work of our author on the dispensation and operations of the Holy Spirit. Even the subsidiary discussions, on the mental prayer of the church of Rome, and the use of devotional formulas, are evidently connected with the peculiar and distinctive object of the treatise,—as designed to illustrate the operations of the Spirit in the devotional exercises of believers.

ANALYSIS.

The object of the discourse is explained. The two main divisions of it are:—I. The evidence of an especial work of the Spirit in prayer and praise; and, II. The illustration of the nature of this work, chap. I.

I. The *evidence* of its reality consists in a minute explanation of two passages in Scripture, Zech. xii. 10, and Gal. iv. 6, II., III. II. Its *general nature* is considered,—prayer having been defined to be a spiritual faculty of exercising Christian graces in the way of vocal requests and supplications to God, IV. The work of the Spirit in the *matter* of prayer is reviewed in greater detail:—as enlightening us into a perception of our spiritual wants; acquainting us with the promises of grace and mercy for our relief; and leading us to express desires for any blessing in order to right and proper ends, V. His work as to the *manner* of prayer is described:—as disposing us to obey God in this duty; implanting holy and gracious desires after the objects sought; giving us delight in God as the object of prayer; and keeping us intent on Christ, as the way and ground of acceptance, VI. The manner of prayer is farther considered with special reference to Eph. vi. 18, VII. In the course of an argument on the duty of external prayer, the promise of the Spirit is exhibited as superseding the necessity of recourse to external forms, on the following grounds:—1. The natural obligation to call on God according to our ability; 2. The example of the saints in Scripture; 3. The circumstance that in all the commands to pray there is no respect to outward helps; 4. The existence of certain means for the improvement of our gift in prayer; 5. The use to which our natural faculties of invention, memory, and elocution, are thus put; and, 6. The necessary exercise of our spiritual abilities, VIII. Certain duties are inferred from the preceding discourse:—1. The ascription to God of all the glory on account of any gift in prayer; and, 2. Constant attention to the duty of prayer, IX.

Two subsidiary discussions follow:—1. A searching exposure of *the mental prayer* recommended by the Church of Rome, in which prayer is merged into spiritual contemplation, without any succession and utterance of thought; it is shown that language is no interference with the workings of devotional sentiment, but serves, on the contrary, to define the objects of thought, and enhance the power of conception, X.: and, 2. A disquisition on the use and value of forms: the mere use of them by some men, as suited to their attainments and experience, is discriminated from the alleged necessity of them for the purposes of worship; and against the latter these objections are urged:—1. There is no promise of the Spirit to assist in the composition of prayers for others; 2. The Spirit is promised that we may be helped, not to compose prayers, but to pray; 3. Forms of prayer are no institution either of the law or the gospel; 4. The alleged practical benefit held to result from them is very questionable, inasmuch as those who have the gift of prayer do not need them, and those deficient in the gift, if believers, have the promise of it, and can only cultivate it by actual exercise; 5. There are better ways in which we may have the matter of prayer suggested to us; and, 6. In the light of experience, forms of prayer are not so conducive to spiritual benefit as the exercise of the gift. Lastly, Some arguments for forms of prayer from instances occurring in Scripture are considered and set aside.—ED.

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PREFACE TO THE READER.

It is altogether needless to premise any thing in this place concerning the necessity, benefit, and use of prayer in general. All men will readily acknowledge that as without it there can be no religion at all, so the life and exercise of all religion doth principally consist therein. Wherefore, that way and profession in religion which gives the best directions for it, with the most effectual motives unto it, and most aboundeth in its observance, hath therein the advantage of all others. Hence also it follows, that as all errors which either pervert its nature or countenance a neglect of a due attendance unto it are pernicious in religion, so differences in opinion, and disputes about any of its vital concerns, cannot but be dangerous and of evil consequence; for on each hand these pretend unto an immediate regulation of Christian practice in a matter of the highest importance unto the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of men. Whereas, therefore, there is nothing more requisite in our religion than that true apprehensions of its nature and use be preserved in the minds of men, the declaration and defence of them, when they are opposed or unduly traduced, is not only justifiable but necessary also.

This is the design of the ensuing discourse. There is in the Scripture a promise of the Holy Ghost to be given unto the church as "a Spirit of grace and of supplications." As such, also, there are particular operations ascribed unto him. Mention is likewise frequently made of the aids and assistances which he affords unto believers in and unto their prayers. Hence they are said to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Of the want of these aids and assistances to enable them to pray according to the mind of God some do profess that they have experience, as also of their efficacy unto that end when they are received. Accordingly, these regulate themselves in this whole duty in the expectation or improvement of them. And there are those who, being accommodated with other aids of another nature, to the same purpose, which they esteem sufficient for them, do look on the former profession and plea of an ability to pray by the aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit to be a mere empty pretence.

And in the management of these different apprehensions those at variance seem to be almost barbarians one to another, the one being not able to understand what the other do vehemently affirm: for they are determined in their minds, not merely by notions of truth and falsehood, but by the experience which they have of the things themselves, a sense and understanding whereof they can by no means communicate unto one another; for whereas spiritual experience of truth is above all other demonstrations unto them that do enjoy it, so it cannot be made an argument for the enlightening and conviction of others. Hence those who plead for prayer by virtue of supplies of gifts and grace from the Holy Spirit do admire that the use or necessity of them herein should be contradicted; nor can they understand what they intend who seem to deny that it is every man's duty, in all his circumstances, to pray as well as he can, and to make use in his so doing of the assistance of the Spirit of God. And by "prayer" they mean that which the most

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eminent and only proper signification of the word doth denote, namely, that which is vocal. Some, on the other side, are so far from the understanding of these things, or a conviction of their reality, that with the highest confidence they despise and reproach the pretence of them. To "pray in the Spirit" is used as a notable expression of scorn, the thing signified being esteemed fond and contemptible.

Moreover, in such cases as this, men are apt to run into excesses in things and ways which they judge expedient, either to countenance their own opinions or to depress and decry those of them from whom they differ. And no instances can be given in this kind of greater extravagances than in that under consideration: for hence it is that some do ascribe the original of *free prayer* amongst us, by the assistance of the Spirit of God, unto an invention of the Jesuits,—which is no doubt to make them the authors of the Bible; and others do avow that all forms of prayer used amongst us in public worship are mere traductions from the Roman Breviaries and Missal. But these things will be afterward spoken unto. They are here mentioned only to evince the use of a sedate inquiry into the truth or the mind of God in this matter; which is the design of the ensuing discourse.

That which should principally guide us in the management of this inquiry is, that it be done unto spiritual advantage and edification, without strife or contention. Now, this cannot be without a diligent and constant attendance unto the two sole rules of judgment herein,—namely, Scripture revelation and the experience of them that do believe; for although the latter is to be regulated by the former, yet where it is so, it is a safe rule unto them in whom it is. And in this case, as in water face answereth unto face, so do Scripture revelation and spiritual experience unto one another. All other reasonings, from customs, traditions, and feigned consequences, are here of no use. The inquiries before us are concerning the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in the aids and assistances which he gives unto believers in and unto their prayers, according unto the mind of God; as also what are the effects and fruits of that work of his, or what are the spiritual abilities which are communicated unto them thereby. Antecedently hereunto it should be inquired whether indeed there be any such thing or no, or whether they are only vainly pretended unto by some that are deceived; but the determination hereof depending absolutely on the foregoing inquiries, it may be handled jointly with them, and needs no distinct consideration. He that would not deceive nor be deceived in his inquiry after these things must diligently attend unto the two forementioned rules of Scripture testimony and experience. Other safe guides he hath none. Yet will it also be granted that from the light of nature, whence this duty springs, wherein it is founded, from whence as unto its essence it cannot vary, as also from generally-received principles of religion suited thereunto, with the uncorrupted practice of the church of God in former ages, much direction may be given unto the understanding of those testimonies and examination of that experience.

Wherefore, the foundation of the whole ensuing discourse is laid in the consideration and exposition of some of those texts of Scripture wherein these things are expressly revealed and proposed unto us, for to insist on them all were endless. This we principally labour in, as that whereby not only must the controversy be finally determined, but the persons that manage it be eternally judged. What is added concerning the experience of them that do believe the truth herein claims no more of argument unto them that have it not than it hath evidence of proceeding from and being suited unto those divine testimonies. But whereas the things that belong unto it are of great moment unto them who do enjoy it, as containing the principal acts, ways, and means of our intercourse and communion with God by Christ Jesus, they are here somewhat at large, on all occasions, insisted on, for

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the edification of those whose concernment lieth only in the practice of the duty itself. Unless, therefore, it can be proved that the testimonies of the Scripture produced and insisted on do not contain that sense and understanding which the words do determinately express (for that only is pleaded), or that some have not an experience of the truth and power of that sense of them, enabling them to live unto God in this duty according to it, all other contests about this matter are vain and useless.

But yet there is no such work of the Holy Spirit pleaded herein as should be absolutely inconsistent with or condemnatory of all those outward aids of prayer by set composed forms which are almost everywhere made use of; for the device being ancient, and in some degree or measure received generally in the Christian world (though a no less general apostasy in many things from the rule of truth at the same time, in the same persons and places, cannot be denied), I shall not judge of what advantage it may be or hath been unto the souls of men, nor what acceptance they have found therein, where it is not too much abused. The substance of what we plead from Scripture and experience is only this, *That whereas God hath graciously promised his Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of grace and supplications, unto them that do believe, enabling them to pray according to his mind and will, in all the circumstances and capacities wherein they are, or which they may be called unto, it is the duty of them who are enlightened with the truth hereof to expect those promised aids and assistances in and unto their prayers, and to pray according to the ability which they receive thereby.* To deny this to be their duty, or to deprive them of their liberty to discharge it on all occasions, riseth up in direct opposition unto the divine instruction of the sacred word.

But, moreover, as was before intimated, there are some generally-allowed principles, which, though not always duly considered, yet cannot at any time be modestly denied, that give direction towards the right performance of our duty herein; and they are these that follow:—

1. *It is the duty of every man to pray for himself.* The light of nature, multiplied divine commands, with our necessary dependence on God and subjection unto him, give life and light unto this principle. To own a Divine Being is to own that which is to be prayed unto, and that it is our duty so to do.

2. *It is the duty of some, by virtue of natural relation or of office, to pray with and for others also.* So is it the duty of parents and masters of families to pray with and for their children and households. This also derives from those great principles of natural light that God is to be worshipped in all societies of his own erection, and that those in the relations mentioned are obliged to seek the chiefest good of them that are committed unto their care; and so is it frequently enjoined in the Scripture. In like manner it is the duty of ministers to pray with and for their flocks, by virtue of especial institution. These things cannot be, nor, so far as I know of, are questioned by any; but practically the most of men live in an open neglect of their duty herein. Were this but diligently attended unto, from the first instance of natural and moral relations unto the instituted offices of ministers and public teachers, we should have less contests about the nature and manner of praying than at present we have. It is holy practice that must reconcile differences in religion, or they will never be reconciled in this world.

3. *Every one who prayeth, either by himself and for himself, or with others and for them, is obliged, as unto all the uses, properties, and circumstances of prayer, to pray as well as he is able;* for by the light of nature every one is obliged in all instances to serve God with his best. The confirmation and exemplification hereof was one end of the institution of sacrifices under the Old Testament; for it was ordained in them that the chief and best of every thing was to be offered unto

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God. Neither the nature of God nor our own duty towards him will admit that we should expect any acceptance with him, unless our design be to serve him with the best that we have, both for matter and manner. So is the mind of God himself declared in the prophet: "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil? Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD. But cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King, saith the LORD of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen," Mal. i. 8, 13, 14.

4. *In our reasonable service, the best wherewith we can serve God consists in the intense, sincere actings of the faculties and affections of our minds, according unto their respective powers, through the use of the best assistances we can attain.* And if we omit or forego, in any instance, the exercise of them according to the utmost of our present ability, we offer unto God the sick and the lame. If men can take it on themselves, in the sight of God, that the invention and use of set forms of prayer, and other the like outward modes of divine worship, are the best that he hath endowed them withal for his service, they are free from the force of this consideration.

5. *There is no man but, in the use of the aids which God hath prepared for that purpose, is able to pray according to the will of God, and as he is in duty obliged, whether he pray by himself and for himself, or with others and for them also.* There is not by these means perfection attainable in the performance of any duty, neither can all attain the same measure and degree as unto the usefulness of prayer and manner of praying; but every one may attain unto that wherein he shall be accepted with God, and according unto the duty whereunto he is obliged, whether personally or by virtue of any relation wherein he stands unto others. To suppose that God requireth duties of men which they cannot perform in an acceptable manner, by virtue and in the use of those aids which he hath prepared and promised unto that end, is to reflect dishonour on his goodness and wisdom in his commands. Wherefore, no man is obliged to pray, in any circumstances, by virtue of any relation or office, but he is able so to do according unto what is required of him; and what he is not able for he is not called unto.

6. *We are expressly commanded to pray, but are nowhere commanded to make prayers for ourselves, much less for others.* This is superadded, for a supposed conveniency, unto the light of nature and Scripture institution.

7. *There is assistance promised unto believers to enable them to pray according unto the will of God; there is no assistance promised to enable any to make prayers for others.* The former part of this assertion is explained and proved in the ensuing discourse, and the latter cannot be disproved. And if it should be granted that the work of composing prayers for others is a good work, falling under the general aids of the Holy Spirit necessary unto every good work whatever, yet are not those aids of the same kind and nature with his actual assistances in and unto prayer as he is the Spirit of grace and supplications: for in the use of those assistances by grace and gifts, every man that useth them doth actually pray, nor are they otherwise to be used; but men do not pray in the making and composing forms of prayer, though they may do so in the reading of them afterward.

8. *Whatever forms of prayer were given out unto the use of the church by divine authority and inspiration, as the Lord's Prayer and the Psalms or Prayers of David, they are to have their everlasting use therein, according unto what they were designed unto.* And be their end and use what it will, they can give no more warranty for human compositions unto the same end, and the injunction of their use, than for other human writings to be added unto the Scripture.

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These and the like principles, which are evident in their own light and truth, will be of use to direct us in the argument in hand, so far as our present design is concerned therein; for it is the vindication of our own principles and practice that is principally designed, and not an opposition unto those of other men. Wherefore, as was before intimated, neither these principles nor the divine testimonies, which we shall more largely insist upon, are engaged to condemn all use of set forms of prayers as sinful in themselves, or absolutely unlawful, or such as so vitiate the worship of God as to render it wholly unacceptable in them that choose so to worship him; for God will accept the persons of those who sincerely seek him, though, through invincible ignorance, they may mistake in sundry things as unto the way and manner of his worship. And how far, as unto particular instances of miscarriage, this rule may extend he only knows, and of men, whatever they pretend, not one. And where any do worship God in Christ with an evidence of holy fear and sincerity, and walk in a conversation answerable unto the rule of the gospel, though they have manifold corruptions in the way of their worship, I shall never judge severely either of their present acceptance with God or of their future eternal condition. This is a safe rule with respect unto others: our own is, to attend with all diligence unto what God hath revealed concerning his worship, and absolutely comply therewith; without which we can neither please him nor come to the enjoyment of him.

I do acknowledge, also, that the general prevalency of the use of set forms of prayer of human invention in Christian assemblies for many ages (more than any other argument that is urged for their necessity) requires a tenderness in judgment as unto the whole nature of them, and the acceptance of their persons in the duty of prayer by whom they are used. Yet no consideration of this usage, seeing it is not warranted by the Scriptures, nor is of apostolical example, nor is countenanced by the practice of the primitive churches, ought to hinder us from discerning and judging of the evils and inconveniences that have ensued thereon, nor from discovering how far they are unwarrantable as unto their imposition. And these evils may be here a little considered.

The *beginnings* of the introduction of the use of set forms of prayer of human composition into the worship of the church are altogether uncertain, but that the reception of them was progressive, by new additions from time to time, is known to all; for neither Rome nor the present Roman Missal was built in a day. In that and the Breviaries did the whole worship of the church issue, at least in these parts of the world. No man is so fond as to suppose that they were of one entire composition, the work of one age, of one man, or any assembly of men at the same time, unless they be so brutishly devout as to suppose that the Mass-book was brought from heaven unto the pope by an angel, as the Alcoran was to Mohammed. It is evident, indeed, that common people, at least of the communion of the papal church, do believe it to be as much of a divine original as the Scripture, and that on the same grounds of the proposal of it unto them, as the only means of divine worship, by their church. Hence is it unto them an idol. But it is well enough known how from small beginnings, by various accessions, it increased unto its present form and station. And this progress, in the reception of devised forms of prayer in the worship of the church carried along with it sundry pernicious concomitants, which we may briefly consider:—

First, in and by the *additions* made unto the first received forms, the superstitious and corrupt doctrines of the apostasy in several ages were insinuated into the worship of the church. That such superstitious and corrupt doctrines were gradually introduced into the church is acknowledged by all Protestants, and is sufficiently known; the supposition of it is the sole foundation of the Reformation. And by this artifice of new additions to received forms, they were from time

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to time admitted into and stated in the worship of the church; by which principally to this very day they preserve their station in the minds of men. Were that foundation of them taken away, they would quickly fall to the ground. By this means did those abominations of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass both leaven and poison the whole worship of the public assemblies, and imposed themselves on the credulity of the people. The disputes of speculative men, superstitious and subtile, about these things, had never infected the minds of the common people of Christians, nor ever been the means of that idolatry which at length spread itself over the whole visible church of these parts of the world, had not this device of prescribed forms of prayer, wherein those abominations were not only expressed but graphically represented and acted (so violently affecting the carnal minds of men superstitious and ignorant), imposed them on their practice, which gradually hardened them with an obdurate credulity; for although they saw no ground or reason doctrinally to believe what was proposed unto them about transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass, and might easily have seen that they were contradictory unto all the conductive principles of men and Christians,—namely, faith, reason, and sense,—yet they deceived themselves into an obstinate pretence of believing in the notion of [the] truth of what they had admitted in practice. Men, I say, of corrupt minds might have disputed long enough about vagrant forms, *accidents without subjects*, transmutation of *substances without accidents*, *sacrifices bloody and unbloody*, before they had vitiated the whole worship of the church with gross idolatry, had not this engine been made use of for its introduction, and the minds of men by this means been inveigled with the practice of it; but when the whole matter and means of it was gradually insinuated into, and at length comprised in, those forms of prayer which they were obliged continually to use in divine service, their whole souls became leavened and tainted with a confidence in and love unto these abominations.

Hence it was that the doctrines concerning the sacraments, and the whole worship of God in the church, as they became gradually corrupted, were not at once objectively and doctrinally proposed to the minds and considerations of men, to be received or rejected, according to the evidence they had of their truth or error (a method due to the constitution of our nature), but gradually insinuated into their practice by additional forms of prayer, which they esteemed themselves obliged to use and observe. This was the gilding of the poisonous pill, whose operation, when it was swallowed, was to bereave men of their sense, reason, and faith, and make them madly avow that to be true which was contrary unto them all.

Besides, as was before intimated, the things themselves that were the groundwork of idolatry,—namely, transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass,—were so acted and represented in those forms of worship as to take great impression on the minds of carnal men, until they were mad on their idols; for when all religion and devotion is let into the soul by fancy and imagination, excited by outward spectacles, they will make mad work in the world, as they have done, and yet continue to do. But hereof I shall speak in the next place.

It had, therefore, been utterly impossible that an idolatrous worship should have been introduced into the church in general, had not the opinion of the necessity of devised forms of prayer been first universally received; at least, it had not been so introduced and so established as to procure and cause the shedding of the blood of thousands of holy persons for not complying with it. By this means alone was brought in that fatal engine of the church's ruin, from whose murderous efficacy few escaped with their lives or souls. Had all churches continued in the liberty wherein they were placed and left by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, it is possible that many irregularities might have prevailed in some of

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them, and many mistakes been admitted in their practice; yet this monster of the mass, devouring the souls of the most, and drinking the blood of many, had never been conceived nor brought forth, at least not nourished into that terrible form and power wherein it appeared and acted for many ages in the world. And upon the account thereof it is not without cause that the Jews say that the Christians received their Tephilloth, or Prayer-books, from Armillus,—that is, Antichrist.

It is true, that when the doctrine of religion is determined and established by civil laws, the laws of the nation where it is professed, as the rule of all outward advantages, liturgies composed in compliance therewithal are not so subject to this mischief; but this ariseth from that external cause alone. Otherwise, wherever those who have the ordering of these things do deviate from the truth once received, as it is common for the most so to do, forms of prayers answerable unto those deviations would quickly be insinuated; and the present various liturgies that are amongst the several sorts of Christians in the world are of little other use than to establish their minds in their peculiar errors, which by this means they adhere unto as articles of their faith.

And hereby did God suffer contempt to be cast upon the supposed wisdom of men about his worship and the ways of it. They would not trust unto his institutions and his care of them, but did first put the ark into a cart, and then, like Uzzah, put forth a hand of force to hold it when it seemed to shake; for it is certain that, if not the first invention, yet the first public recommendation and prescription, of devised forms of prayer unto the practice of the churches, were designed to prevent the insinuation of false opinions and corrupt modes of worship into the public administrations. This was feared from persons infected with heresy that might creep into the ministry. So the orthodox and the Arians composed prayers, hymns, and doxologies, the one against the other, inserting in them passages confirming their own profession and condemning that of their adversaries. Now, however this invention might be approved whilst it kept within bounds, yet it proved the Trojan horse that brought in all evils into the city of God in its belly; for he who was then at work in the mystery of iniquity laid hold on the engine and occasion to corrupt those prayers which, by the constitution of them who had obtained power in them, the churches were obliged and confined unto. And this took place effectually in the constitution of the worship of the second race of Christians, or the nations that were converted unto the Christian faith after they had destroyed the western Roman empire. To speak briefly and plainly, it was by this means alone,—namely, of the necessary use of devised forms of prayer in the assemblies of the church, and of them alone,—that the mass, with its transubstantiation and sacrifice, and all the idolatrous worship wherewith they are accompanied, were introduced, until the world, inflamed with those idols, drenched itself in the blood of the saints and martyrs of Christ, for their testimony against these abominations. And if it had been sooner discovered that no church was intrusted with power from Christ to frame and impose such devised forms of worship as are not warranted by the Scripture, innumerable evils might have been prevented: for, that there were no liturgies composed, no imposed use of them, in the primitive churches for some ages, is demonstratively proved with the very same arguments whereby we prove that they had neither the mass nor the use of images in their worship; for besides the utter silence of them in the apostolical writings, and those of the next ensuing ages,—which is sufficient to discard their pretence unto any such antiquity,—there are such descriptions given of the practice of the churches in their worship as are inconsistent with them and exclusive of them; besides, they give such a new face to divine worship, so different from the portraiture of it delivered in the Scripture, as is hardly reconcilable thereunto, and so not quickly embraced in the church.

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I do not say that this fatal consequence of the introduction of humanly-devised set forms of prayer in the worship of the church, in the horrible abuse made of it, is sufficient to condemn them as absolutely unlawful; for where the opinions leading unto such idolatrous practices are openly rejected and condemned, as was before intimated, there all the causes, means, and occasions of that idolatry may be taken out of them and separated from them, as it is in the liturgies of the reformed churches, whether imposed or left free;—but it is sufficient to lay in the balance against that veneration which their general observance in many ages may invite or procure; and it is so also to warrant the disciples of Christ to stand fast in the liberty wherewith he hath made them free.

Another evil, which either accompanied or closely followed on the introduction of devised forms of prayer into the church, was a *supposed necessity of adorning the observance of them with sundry arbitrary ceremonies.* And this also in the end, as is confessed among all Protestants, increased superstition in its worship, with various practices leading unto idolatry. It is evident that the use of free prayer in church administrations can admit of no ceremonies but such as are either of divine institution, or are natural circumstances of the actions wherein the duties of worship do materially consist. Divine institution and natural light are the rules of all that order and decency which is needful unto it. But when these devised forms were introduced, with a supposition of their necessity, and sole use in the church in all acts of immediate worship, men quickly found that it was needful to set them off with adventitious ornaments. Hereon there was gradually found out, and prescribed unto constant observation, so many outward postures and gestures, with attires, music, bowings, cringes, crossings, venerations, censings, altars, images, crucifixes, responds, alternatives, and such a rabble of other ceremonies, as rendered the whole worship of the church ludicrous, burdensome, and superstitious. And hereon it came to pass that he who is to officiate in divine service is obliged to learn and practise so many turnings and windings of himself, eastward and westward, to the altar, to the wall, to the people; so many gestures and postures, in kneeling, rising, standings, bowings, less and profound, secret and loud speakings, in a due observance of the interposition of crossings, with removals from one place to another, with provision of attires, in their variety of colours and respect to all the furniture of their altars,—as are difficult to learn, and foolishly antic in their practice, above all the preparations of players for the stage. Injunctions for these and the like observances are the subject of the rubric of the Missal and the cautels of the Mass.

That these things have not only no affinity with the purity, simplicity, and spirituality of evangelical worship, but were invented utterly to exclude it out of the church and the minds of men, needs no proof unto any who ever read the Scripture with due consideration. Nor is the office of the ministry less corrupted and destroyed by it; for besides a sorry cunning in this practice, and the reading of some forms of words in an accommodation unto these rites, there was little more than an easy good intention to do what he doth, and not the quite contrary, required to make any one man or woman (as it once at least fell out) to administer in all sacred worship.

Having utterly lost the Spirit of grace and supplications, neglecting at best all his aids and assistances, and being void of all experience in their minds of the power and efficacy of prayer by virtue of them, they found it necessary by these means to set off and recommend their dead forms; for the lifeless carcass of their forms merely alone were no more meet to be esteemed prayer than a tree or a log was to be esteemed a god, before it was shaped, fashioned, gilded, and adorned. By this means they taught the image of prayer, which they had made, to speak and act a part to the satisfaction of the spectators; for the bare reading of a

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form of words, especially as it was ordered in an unknown tongue, could never have given the least contentment unto the multitude, had it not been set off with this variety of ceremonies, composed to make an appearance of devotion and sacred veneration. Yet, when they had done their utmost, they could never equal the ceremonies and rites of the old temple-worship, in beauty, glory, and order; nor yet those of the heathen, in their sacred Eleusinian mysteries, for number, solemnity, gravity, and appearance of devotion. Rejecting the true glory of gospel-worship, which the apostle expressly declares to consist in the "administration of the Spirit," they substituted that in the room thereof which debased the profession of Christian religion beneath that of the Jews and Pagans, especially considering that the most of their ceremonies were borrowed of them or stolen from them. But I shall never believe that their conversion of the holy prayers of the church, by an open contempt of the whole work of the Spirit of God in them, into a theatrical, pompous observance of ludicrous rites and ceremonies, can give so much as present satisfaction unto any who are not given up to strong delusions to believe a lie. The exercise of ingrafted prevalent superstition will appease a natural conscience; outward forms and representations of things believed will please the fancy, and exercise the imagination; variety, and frequent changes of modes, gestures, and postures, with a sort of prayer always beginning and always ending, will entertain present thoughts and outward senses, so as that men, finding themselves by these means greatly affected, may suppose that they pray very well when they do nothing less: for prayer, consisting in a holy exercise of faith, love, trust, and delight in God, acting themselves in the representation of our wills and desires unto him, through the aid and assistance of the Holy Ghost, may be absent, where all these are most effectually present.

This also produced all the pretended ornaments of their temples, chapels, and oratories, by crucifixes, images, a multiplication of altars, with relics, tapers, vestments, and other utensils.

None of these things, whereby Christian religion is corrupted and debased, would ever have come into the minds of men, had not a necessity of their invention been introduced by the establishment of set forms of prayer, as the only way and means of divine worship; and wherever they are retained, proportionably unto the principles of the doctrine which men profess, some such ceremonies must be retained also. I will not, therefore, deny but that here lieth the foundation of all our present differences about the manner of divine worship. Suppose a necessity of confining the solemn worship of the church unto set forms of prayer, and I will grant that sundry rituals and ceremonies may be well judged necessary to accompany their observance; for without them they will quickly grow obsolete and unsatisfactory. And if, on the other hand, free prayer in the church be allowed, it is evident that nothing but the grace and gifts of the Holy Ghost, with a due regard unto the decency of natural circumstances, is required in divine service, or can be admitted therein.

Neither yet is this consequent, how inseparable soever it seems from the sole public use of set forms of prayer in sacred administrations, pleaded to prove them either in themselves or their use to be unlawful. The design of this consideration is only to show that they have been so far abused, that they are so subject to be abused, and do so alway stand in need to be abused, that they may attain the ends aimed at by them, as much weakens the plea of the necessity of their imposition.

For this also is *another* evil that hath attended their invention. The guides of the church, after a while, were not contented to make use of humanly-devised forms of prayer, confining themselves unto their use alone in all public administrations, but, moreover, they judged it meet to *impose* the same practice on all whom they esteemed to be under their power. And this at length they thought lawful,

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yea, necessary to do on penalties, ecclesiastical and civil, and in the issue capital. When this injunction first found a prevalent entertainment is very uncertain. For the first two or three centuries there were no systems of composed forms of prayer used in any church whatever, as hath been proved. Afterward, when they began to be generally received, on such grounds and for such reasons as I shall not here insist on (but may do so in a declaration of "the nature and use of spiritual gifts, with their continuance in the church, and an inquiry into the causes of their decay"[1]), the authority of some great persons did recommend the use of their compositions unto other churches, even such as had a mind to make use of them, as they saw good. But as unto this device of their imposition, confining churches not only unto the necessary use of them in general, but unto a certain composition and collection of them, we are beholden for all the *advantage* received thereby unto the popes of Rome alone, among the churches of the second edition: for, from their own good inclination, and by their own authority, without the advice of councils or pretence of traditions,—the two Gorgons' heads whereby in other cases they frighten poor mortals, and turn them into stones,—by various degrees they obtained a right to impose them, and did it accordingly; for when the use and benefit of them had been for a while pleaded, and thence a progress made unto their necessity, it was judged needful that they should be imposed on all churches and Christians by their ecclesiastical authority. But when afterward they had insinuated into them, and lodged in their bowels, the two great idols of transubstantiation and the unbloody sacrifice, not only mulcts personal and pecuniary, but capital punishments, were enacted and executed to enforce their observance. This brought fire and fagot into Christian religion, making havoc of the true church of Christ, and shedding the blood of thousands; for the martyrdom of all that have suffered death in the world for their testimony against the idolatries of the mass derives originally from this spring alone of the necessary imposition of complete liturgical forms of prayer; for this is the sole foundation of the Roman Breviary and Missal, which have been the Abaddons of the church of Christ in these parts of the world, and are ready once more to be so again. Take away this foundation, and they all fall to the ground. And it is worth consideration of what kind that principle is, which was naturally improved unto such pernicious effects, which quickly was found to be a meet and effectual engine in the hand of Satan to destroy and murder the servants of Christ.

Had the churches of Christ been left unto their primitive liberty under the enjoined duties of reading and expounding the Scripture, of singing psalms unto the praise of God, of the administration of the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, and of diligent preaching the word, all of them with prayer, according unto the abilities and spiritual gifts of them who did preside in them, as it is evident that they were for some ages, it is impossible for any man to imagine what evils would have ensued thereon that might be of any consideration, in comparison of those enormous mischiefs which followed on the contrary practice. And as unto all the inconveniences which, as it is pretended, might ensue on this liberty, there is sufficient evangelical provision for their prevention or cure made in the gospel constitution and communion of all the true churches of Christ.

But this was not the whole of the evil that attended this imposition, for by this means *all spiritual, ministerial gifts were caused to cease in the church;* for as they are talents given to trade withal, or manifestations of the Spirit given to profit or edify the church, they will not reside in any subject, they will not abide, if they are by any received, if they are not improved by continual exercise. We see every day what effects the contempt or neglect of them doth produce. Wherefore, this exercise of them being restrained and excluded by this imposition, they

[1] See this volume of the author's works, p. 420.—Ed.

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were utterly lost in the church, so that it was looked on as a rare thing for any one to be able to pray in the administration of divine worship, yea, the pretence of such an ability was esteemed a crime, and the exercise of it a sin scarce to be pardoned; yet do I not find it in any of the ancient canons reckoned among the faults for which a bishop or a presbyter was to be deposed. But that hereon arose, in those who were called to officiate in public assemblies, as unto the gifts which they had received for the edification of the church in divine administrations, that neglect which hath given a fatal wound unto the light and holiness of it, is openly evident; for when the generality of men of that order had provision of prayers made for them, which they purchased at an easy rate, or had them provided for them at the charge of the people, they were contented to be at rest, freed from that labour and travail of mind which are required unto the constant exercise and improvement of spiritual gifts. This imposition was the grave wherein they were buried; for at length, as it is manifest in the event, our Lord Jesus Christ being provoked with their sloth and unbelief, did withhold the communication of such gifts from the generality of those who did officiate in divine worship. And hereby they lost, also, one great evidence of the continuance of his mediatory life in heaven for the preservation of the church.

It is known that this was and is the state of things in the Roman church with reference unto their whole worship in their public assemblies; and, therefore, although they have indulged divers enthusiasts, whose revelations and actings, pretended from the Holy Spirit, have tended to the confirmation of their superstitions, and some of them have ventured at notions about mental prayer which they understand not themselves, yet as unto free prayer by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, in the church assemblies or otherwise, they were the first, and continue to be the fiercest opposers of it: and it is their interest so to be; for shake this foundation of the imposition of an entire system of humanly-devised prayers for the only way and means of the worship of the church, and the whole fabric of the mass, with all the weight of their religion (if vanity and imagination may be said to have any weight) which is laid thereon, will tumble into the pit from whence it came. And, therefore, I must here acquaint the reader that the first occasion of writing this discourse was the perusal of Mr Cressy's preface to his Church History,[1] wherein, out of a design to advance the pretended mental prayer of some of his enthusiasts, he reflects with much contumely and reproach upon that free praying by the aids of the Spirit of God which we plead for; and he will find that all his pretences are examined in the latter part of this discourse.

But notwithstanding these things, those of the Roman church do at this day boast themselves of their devotions in their prayers private and public, and have prevailed thereby on many, disposed unto a compliance with them by their own guilt, ignorance, and superstition. The vanity of their pretence hath been well detected, by evincing the idolatry whereby all or the most of their devotions are vitiated and rendered unacceptable. But this also is of weight with me, that the provision of the system and order of their whole devotion, and its exercise, are apparently composed and fitted unto the exclusion of the whole work of the Spirit of God in prayer; and yet do they continue under such an incredible delusion as to oppose, revile, and condemn the prayers of others who are not of their communion, on this consideration, that those who make them have not the Holy Spirit nor his aids, which are all confined unto their church! But if any society of men in the world maintaining the outward profession of Christian religion can do more to exclude the Holy Ghost and all his operations, in prayer and divine worship, than

[1] Hugh Paulin de Cressey was a noted controversialist in defence of Popery, and, among other productions devoted to this object, wrote two treatises in reply to Stillingfleet. The work to which Owen alludes is entitled, "Church History of Britain; or, England from the Beginning of Christianity to the Norman Conquest," and was published in 1668.—Ed.

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their church hath done, I shall acknowledge myself greatly mistaken. It is nothing but ignorance of him and his whole work, with all the ends for which he is promised unto the church (that I say not a hatred and detestation of them) that causeth any to embrace their ways of devotion.

But to return. The things pleaded for may be reduced unto the ensuing heads:—

1. No persons, no churches, are obliged, by virtue of any divine constitution, precept, or approved example, to confine themselves, in their public or private worship, unto *set or humanly-devised forms of prayer*. If any such constitution, precept, or example can be produced (which hitherto hath not been done) it ought to be complied withal. And whilst others are left unto their liberty in their use, this is sufficient to enervate all pleas for their imposition.

2. There is a *promise* in the Scripture, there are many promises, made and belonging unto the church unto the end of the world, of the communication of the Holy Spirit unto it, as unto *peculiar aids and assistances in prayer*. To deny this, is to overthrow the foundation of the holiness and comfort of all believers, and to bring present ruin to the souls of men in distress.

3. It is the duty of believers to look after, to pray for, those promised aids and assistances in prayer. Without this all those promises are despised, and looked on as a flourish of words, without truth, power, or efficacy in them. But,—

4. This they are commanded to do, and have *blessed experience* of success therein. The former is plain in the Scripture, and the latter must be left unto their own testimony living and dying.

5. Beyond the divine institution of all the ordinances of worship in the church, with the determination of the matter and form which are essential unto them, contained in the Scripture, and a due attendance unto natural light in outward circumstances, there is nothing needful unto the due and orderly celebration of all public worship in its assembly. If any such thing be pretended, it is what Christ never appointed, nor the apostles ever practised, nor the first churches after them, nor hath it any promise of acceptance.

6. For the preservation of *the unity of faith*, and the communion of churches among themselves therein, they may express an agreement, as in doctrine by a joint confession of faith, so in a declaration of the material and substantial parts of worship, with the order and method thereof; on which foundation they may in all things communicate with each other as churches, and in the practice of their members.

7. Whereas the differences about prayer under consideration concern Christian practice in the vitals of religion, great respect is to be had unto the *experience* of them that do believe, where it is not obstructed and clouded by prejudices, sloth, or adverse principles and opinions. Therefore, the substance of the greatest part of the ensuing discourse consists principally in the declaration of those concernments of prayer which relate unto practice and experience. And hence it follows,—

8. That the best expedient to compose these differences amongst us, is for every one to *stir up the gift and grace of God* that is in him, and all of us to give up ourselves unto that diligence, frequency, fervency, and perseverance in prayer which God requireth of us; especially in such a season as that wherein we live,—a time wherein they, whoever they be, who trouble others may, for aught they know, be near unto trouble themselves. This will be the most effectual means to lead us all unto the acknowledgment of the truth, and without which an agreement in notions is of little use or value.

But, I confess, hopes are weak concerning the due application of this remedy unto any of our evils or distempers. The opinions of those who deny all internal, real, efficacious operations of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men, and deride all

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their effects, have so far diffused and rivetted themselves into the minds of many that little is to be expected from a retreat unto those aids and reliefs. This evil in the profession of religion was reserved for these latter ages; for although the work and grace of the Holy Spirit in divine worship was much neglected and lost in the world, yet no instances can be given in ages past of such contempt cast upon all his internal grace and operations as now abounds in the world. If the Pelagians, who were most guilty, did fall into any such excesses, they have escaped the records and monuments that remain of their deportment. Bold efforts they are of atheistical inclinations in men openly avowing their own ignorance and utter want of all experience in things spiritual and heavenly. Neither doth the person of Christ or his office meet with better entertainment amongst many; and by some they have been treated with scurrility and blasphemy. In the meantime, the contests about communion with churches are great and fierce. But where these things are received and approved, those who live not on a traditionary faith will not forsake Christ and the gospel, or renounce faith and experience, for the communion of any church in the world.

But all flesh almost hath corrupted its way. The power of religion, and the experience of it in the souls of men, being generally lost, the profession of it is of no great use, nor will long abide; yea, multitudes, all the world over, seem to be weary of the religion which themselves profess, so far as it is pleaded to be of divine revelation, be it true or false, unless it be where they have great secular advantages by their profession of it. There is no greater pretence of a flourishing state in religion than that of some churches of the Roman communion, especially one at this day;—but if the account which is given us from among themselves concerning it be true, it is not much to be gloried in; for set aside the multitude of atheists, anti-scripturists, and avowed disbelievers of the supernatural mysteries of the gospel, and the herd that remains influenced into a hatred and persecution of the truth by a combination of men upholding themselves and their way by extravagant secular interests and advantages, is not very highly considerable, yea, their present height seems to be on a precipice. What inroads in other places,—bold opinions concerning the authority of Scripture and the demonstration of it, the person and office of Christ, the Holy Spirit and all his operations, with the advancement of a pretence of morality in opposition to evangelical grace in its nature and efficacy,—are made every day is known unto all who consider these things. And although the effects of this poison discover themselves daily, in the decays of piety, the increase of immoralities of all sorts, and the abounding of flagitious sins, exposing nations unto the high displeasure of God, yet the security of most in this state of things proclaims itself in various fruits of it, and can never be sufficiently deplored.

Whereas, therefore, one means of the preservation of the church, and its deliverance out of these evils, is a due attendance unto the discharge of this duty of prayer, the declaration of its nature, with a vindication of the springs and causes from whence it derives its efficacy, which are attempted in the ensuing discourse, may, I hope, through the blessing of God, be of some use unto such whose minds are sincere in their inquiries after truth.

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THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER AS THE SPIRIT OF GRACE AND SUPPLICATIONS, AND THE DUTY OF BELIEVERS THEREIN;

WITH A BRIEF INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE AND USE OF MENTAL PRAYER AND FORMS.

CHAPTER I.

The use of prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit therein.

THE works of the Spirit of God towards believers are either general, and not confined with a respect unto any one duty more than another, or particular, with respect unto some especial duty. Of the first sort are *regeneration* and *sanctification*, which, being common unto them all, are the general principles of all actings of grace or particular duties in them. But there are, moreover, sundry especial works or operations of this Holy Spirit in and towards the disciples of Christ, which, although they may be reduced unto the general head of *sanctification*, yet they fall under an especial consideration proper unto themselves. Of this sort is the *aid or assistance which he gives unto us in our prayers and supplications.*

I suppose it will be granted that prayer, in the whole compass and extent of it, as comprising meditation, supplication, praise, and thanksgiving, is one of the most signal duties of religion. The light of nature in its most pregnant notions, with its practical language in the consciences of mankind, concurs in its suffrage with the Scripture in this matter; for they both of them jointly witness that it is not only an important duty in religion, but also that without it there neither is nor can be the exercise of any religion in the world. Never any persons lived in the acknowledgment of a Deity, but under the conduct of the same apprehension they thought the duty of vows, prayers, and praises, incumbent on them, as they found occasion; yea, although they found out external, ceremonious ways of solemnizing their devotions, yet it was this duty of prayer alone which was their natural, necessary, fundamental acknowledgment of that Divine

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Being which they did own. Neither are there any considerable stories extant recording the monuments of the ancient heathen nations of the world, wherein (to the shame of degenerate Christianity it may be spoken) there are not more frequent accounts given of their sacred invocations and supplications unto their supposed gods than are to be found in any of the historical monuments and stories concerning the actions of Christian nations in these latter ages. This, therefore, is the most natural and most eminent way and means of our converse with God, without which converse we have no present advantage above the beasts that perish but such as will turn unto our eternal disadvantage in that misery whereof they are incapable. This is the way whereby we exercise towards him all that grace which we do receive from him, and render him an acceptable acknowledgment of that homage and revenue of glory which we are never able to exhibit in their due kind and measure. Of what use and advantage the due performance of this duty is unto ourselves no man is able fully to express; every one can add somewhat of his own experience. But we need not insist on the commendation of prayer, for it will be said, "By whom was it ever discommended?"

And I wish I saw reason to acquiesce in that reply; for not only the practice of the most, but the declared opinions of many, do evidence that neither the excellency of this duty nor its necessity doth find such acceptance and esteem in the minds of men as is pretended. But this being not my present design, I shall not farther insist upon it; for my purpose is not to treat of the nature, necessity, properties, uses, effects, and advantages, of this gracious duty, as it is the vital breath of our spiritual life unto God. Its original in the law of nature, as the first and principal means of the acknowledgment of a Divine Power, whereof the neglect is a sufficient evidence of practical atheism (for he that prayeth not says in his heart, "There is no God"); its direction in the Scripture, as to the rule, manner, and proper object of it; the necessity of its constant use and practice, both from especial commands and our state in this world, with the whole variety of inward and outward occasions that may befall us, or we may be exercised withal; arguments, motives, and encouragements unto constancy, fervency, and perseverance in the performance of the duty of it, with known examples of its mighty efficacy and marvellous success; the certain advantages which the souls of believers do receive thereby, in spiritual aids and supplies of strength, with peace and consolation; with sundry other of its concernments, although much treated of already by many, might yet be farther considered and improved. But none of these is my present design. The interest of the Holy Spirit of God by his gracious operations in it is that alone which I shall inquire into.

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And it cannot be denied but that the work and actings of the Spirit of grace in and towards believers with respect unto the duty of prayer are more frequently and expressly asserted in the Scripture than his operations with respect unto any other particular grace or duty whatever. If this should be called into question, the ensuing discourse, I hope, will sufficiently vindicate and confirm its truth. But hereby believers are instructed, as in the importance of the duty itself, so in the use and necessity of the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God in and unto the right discharge or performance of it; for where frequent plain revelations concur, in multiplied commands and directions, with continual experience, as it is with them in this case, their instruction is firm, and in a way of being fixed on their minds. As this rendereth an inquiry hereinto both necessary and seasonable, (for what can be more so than that wherein the spiritual life and comfort of believers are so highly concerned, and which exhibiteth unto us so gracious a condescension of divine love and goodness?) so, moreover, the opposition that is made in the world against the work of the Spirit of God herein, above all other his operations, requires that something be spoken in the vindication of it.

But the enmity hereunto seems to be peculiar unto these latter ages, I mean among such as pretend unto any acquaintance with these things from the Scripture. It will be hard to find an instance in former ages of any unto whom the Spirit of God, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, was a reproach. But as now the contradiction herein is great and fierce, so is there not any difference concerning any practical duty of religion wherein parties at variance are more confident and satisfied in and about their own apprehensions than they are who dissent about the work of the Spirit of God in our prayers and supplications; for those who oppose what is ascribed by others unto him herein are not content to deny and reject it, and to refuse a communion in the faith and practice of the work so ascribed unto him, but, moreover, such is the confidence they have in their conceptions, that they revile and speak evil contemptuously and despitefully of what they do oppose. Hence ability to pray, as is pleaded, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost is so far from being allowed to be a gift, or a grace, or a duty, or any way useful among men, that it is derided and scorned as a paltry faculty, fit to be exploded from among Christians; and at length it is traduced as an invention and artifice of the Jesuits, to the surprisal and offence of many sober persons; the unadvisedness of which insinuation the ensuing discourse will manifest.

Others, again, profess that of all the privileges whereof they are made partakers in this world, of all the aids, assistances, or gifts which they receive from or by the Spirit of God, that which he com-

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municates and helps them withal in their prayers and supplications is the most excellent and inestimable; and herein they have, living and dying, in all troubles, distresses, temptations, and persecutions, such assurance and satisfaction in their minds, as that they are not in the least moved with all the scorn and contempt that are cast upon their profession and practice in the exercise of the gift which they have received, but rather judge that they contract the guilt of great sin to themselves by whom this work of the Spirit is reproached. Hence I know not any difference about religious things that is managed with greater animosities in the minds of men and worse consequents than this which is about the work of the Spirit of God in prayer; which, indeed, is the hinge on which all other differences about divine worship do turn and depend. It may, therefore, be well worth our while, yea, it is our duty, sedately and diligently to inquire into what the Scripture teacheth us in this matter; wherein we must acquiesce, and whereby all experiences on the one side or the other must be tried and regulated. Two things, therefore, I do propose unto myself in the ensuing discourse, concerning both which I shall plainly and briefly endeavour the satisfaction of indifferent and unprejudiced readers;—and these are, first, To evince *that there is promised and actually granted an especial work of the Spirit of God in the prayers or praises of believers under the New Testament;* secondly, To declare the *nature of that work, wherein it doth consist*, or the manner of the operation of the Holy Spirit therein. And if in these things no impression can be made on the minds of men possessed with those mighty prejudices which reject their very proposal and all consideration of them with contempt, yet it may be of use unto them who, being not biassed with the undue love or hatred of parties of men, nor elated with high valuations of their own conceptions above those of others, whom they think they have reason if not to hate, yet to scorn, do sincerely desire to live unto God, and to prefer the performance of their duty unto all other considerations, endeavouring to subdue their inclinations and affections thereunto. Nor do I desire more of any reader but that he will grant that he is herein conversant about things which will have an influence into his everlasting account

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CHAPTER II.

Zech. xii. 10 opened and vindicated.

THE especial promise of the administration of the Spirit of God unto the end under consideration is that which I shall lay as the

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foundation of the ensuing discourse. Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." The Spirit here promised is the Spirit of God, "the Holy Spirit," with respect unto the especial end for which he is promised. And the manner of his administration in the accomplishment of the promise is expressed by וְשָׁפַכְתִּי, "I will pour out." The same word is used to the same purpose, Ezek. xxxix. 29, Joel ii. 28, as are also other words of the same importance, which we render by "pouring out," as Prov. i. 23; Isa. xxxii. 15, xliv. 3, lii. 15.

1. Two things have been elsewhere declared concerning this expression, applied unto the communication of the Holy Ghost:—(1.) That a plentiful dispensation of him unto the end for which he is promised, with respect unto a singular and eminent degree in his operations, is intended therein. The apostle expresseth this word, or the accomplishment of what is promised in it, by ἐξέχεεν πλουσίως, Tit. iii. 6, "he hath richly," or abundantly, "poured out his Spirit." Not, therefore, a mere grant and communication of the Spirit, but a plentiful effusion of him, is intended; which must have some eminent effects as pledges and tokens thereof, for it is absurd to speak of a "plentiful, abundant effusion," with degrees above what was before granted, and yet there be no certain ways or means whereby it may be evidenced and demonstrated. The Spirit, therefore, is so promised in this place as to produce some notable and peculiar effects of his communication. (2.) That this promise is peculiar unto the days of the gospel; I mean, every promise is so where mention is made of pouring out the Spirit on men; which may be evinced by the consideration of every place where this expression is used. But in this place it is most unquestionable, the immediate effect of it being a looking unto Christ as he was pierced. And it may be yet farther observed, that there is a tacit comparison in it with some other time or season, or some other act of God, wherein or whereby he gave his Spirit before, but not in that way, manner, or measure that he now promiseth to bestow him. Of the whole of these observations, Didymus gives us a brief account, De Spir. Sanc. i. 1: "Significat autem effusionis verbum, largam, et divitem muneris abundantiam; itaque cum unus quis alicubi, aut duo Spiritum Sanctum accipiunt, non dicitur, 'Effundam de Spiritu meo,' sed tunc, quando in universas gentes munus Spiritus Sancti redundaverit."

2. Those unto whom he is thus promised are "the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem,"—that is, the whole church, expressed in a distribution into the ruling family and the body of the people under their rule. And the family of David, which was then

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in supreme power among the people in the person of Zerubbabel, is expressly mentioned for three reasons:—(1.) Because the faithfulness of God in his promises was concerned in the preservation of that family, whereof the Messiah was to spring, Christ himself being thereby, in the rule of the church, typed out in an especial manner. (2.) Because all the promises in a peculiar manner were first to be fulfilled in the person of Christ, so typed by David and his house. On him the Spirit, under the New Testament, was first to be poured out in all fulness; and from him to be communicated unto others. (3.) It may be to denote the especial gifts and graces that should be communicated unto them who were to be employed in the rule and conduct of the church under him, the king and head thereof. And "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" is a phrase expressive of the whole church, because that was the seat of all their public ordinances of worship. See Ps. cxxii. Wherefore, the whole spiritual church of God, all believers, are the object of this promise, as represented in the "house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

3. The especial qualifications of the promised Spirit are two; for,—(1.) He is to be רוּחַ חֵן, a "Spirit of grace." חֵן which the Greek constantly renders χάρις, and we from the Latin *gratia*, "grace," is derived from חָנַן, as is also the following word, which signifies to "have mercy," or "compassion," to be "gracious;" as all the words whereby God's gracious dealings with sinners [are expressed] in the Hebrew do include the signification of pity, compassion, free goodness, and bounty. And it is variously used in the Scripture: sometimes for the grace and favour of God, as it is the fountain of all gracious and merciful effects towards us, Rom. i. 7, iv. 16, v. 2, 15, 20, vi. 1, xi. 5; 1 Cor. i. 3; and in other places innumerable;—and sometimes for the principal effect thereof, or the gracious favour of God whereby he accepts us in Christ, Eph. ii. 5; 2 Thess. i. 12; which is the grace the apostle prays for in the behalf of the church, Rom. xvi. 20; 1 Cor. xvi. 23. And sometimes it is applied unto the favour of men, and acceptation with them, called the "finding grace" or "favour" in the sight of any, Gen. xxxix. 4, 21; 1 Sam. ii. 26; Prov. iii. 4; Esther ii. 15, 17, v. 2; Luke ii. 52; Acts iv. 33;—and sometimes for the free effectual efficacy of grace in those in whom it is, Acts xiv. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 9;—and sometimes for our justification and salvation by the free grace or favour of God in Christ, John i. 17; 1 Pet. i. 13;—for the gospel itself, as the instrument of the declaration and communication of the grace of God, 2 Cor. vi. 1; Eph. iii. 2; Col. i. 6; Tit. ii. 11;—for the free donation of the grace and gifts of the Spirit, John i. 16; Eph. iv. 7. And many other significations it hath, which belong not unto our purpose.

Three things may be intended in this adjunct of *grace*.

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[1.] A respect of the *sovereign cause* of his dispensation, which is no other but the *mere grace* of God. He may be called a "Spirit of grace," because his donation is an effect of grace, without the least respect unto any desert in those unto whom he is given. This reason of the appellation is declared, Tit. iii. 4–7. The sole cause and reason, in opposition unto our own works or deservings, of the pouring out of the Spirit upon us, is the love and kindness of God in Jesus Christ; whence he may be justly called a "Spirit of grace." [2.] Because he is the *author* of all grace in and unto them on whom he is *poured out;* so God is called the "God of all grace," because he is the fountain and author of it. And that the Holy Spirit is the immediate efficient cause of all grace in us hath been elsewhere proved, both in general and in the principal instances of regeneration and sanctification; and it shall be yet farther confirmed in what doth ensue. [3.] חֵן is commonly used for that *grace* or *favour* which one hath with another: "Let me find grace in thy sight;" as in the instances before quoted. And so the Spirit also may be called a "Spirit of grace," because those on whom he is poured out have grace and favour with God; they are gracious with him, as being "accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 6. Whereas, therefore, all these concur wherever this Spirit is communicated, I know no reason why we may not judge them all here included, though that in the second place be especially intended. The Spirit is promised to work grace and holiness in all on whom he is bestowed.

(2.) He is, as thus poured out, a "Spirit תַּחֲנוּנִים, of supplications;" that is, of *prayer for grace and mercy.* The word is formed from חָנַן, as the other, to be gracious or merciful, and, expressing our act towards God, it is prayer for grace,—supplication; and it is never used but to express vocal prayer, either in the assemblies of the people of God or by private persons. "Hearken to the voice of my supplications," is rendered by the apostle Paul *ἱκετηρίας*, Heb. v. 7; in which place alone in the Scripture that word is used. Originally it signifies a bough or olive-branch wrapped about with wool or bays, or something of the like nature, which those carried in their hands and lifted up who were suppliants unto others for the obtaining of peace or the averting of their displeasure. Hence came the phrase of *velamenta præferre,* to hold out such covered branches. So Livy, De Bel. Punic., lib. xxiv. cap. 30, "Ramos oleæ, ac velamenta alia supplicantium porrigentes, orare, ut reciperent sese;"—"Holding forth olive-branches, and other covered tokens used by suppliants, they prayed that they might be received" into grace and favour. Which custom Virgil declares in his Æneas addressing himself to Evander:—

> "Optime Grajugenûm, cui me fortuna precari
> Et vittâ comptos voluit prætendere ramos."—Virg. Æn. viii. 127.

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And they called them ἱκετηρίους θαλλούς, "branches of supplication," or prayer. And they constantly called those prayers which they made solemnly unto their gods, *supplicia* and *supplicationes*, Liv., lib. x. cap. 23, "Eo anno prodigia multa fuerunt: quorum averruncandorum caussa supplicationes in biduum senatus decrevit;" a form of which kind of prayer we have in Cato, De Re Rustica, cap. xiii., "Mars pater te precor quæsoque ut calamitates ——."

Some render תַּחֲנוּנִים by *miserationes* or *lamentationes*, and interpret it of men's bemoaning themselves in their prayers for grace and mercy,—which in the issue varies not from the sense insisted on; but whereas it is derived from חָנַן, which signifies to be merciful or gracious, and expresses an act of ours towards God, it can properly signify nothing but supplications for mercy and grace, nor is it otherwise used in the Scripture. See Job xli. 3; Prov. xviii. 23; Dan. ix. 3; Jer. xxxi. 9; 2 Chron. vi. 21; Jer. iii. 21; Ps. xxviii. 2, 6, xxxi. 22, cxvi. 1, cxxx. 2, cxl. 6, cxliii. 1; Dan. ix. 18, 23; Ps. lxxxvi. 6; which are all the places, besides this, where the word is used; in all which it denotes deprecation of evil and supplication for grace, constantly in the plural number, to denote the earnestness of men.

תַּחֲנוּנִים, therefore, are properly supplications for grace and mercy, for freedom and deliverance from evil, put by a synecdoche for all sorts of prayer whatever. We may, therefore, inquire in what sense the Holy Spirit of God is called a "Spirit of supplications," or what is the reason of this attribution unto him. And he must be so either formally or efficiently, either because he is so in himself or unto us. If in the former way, then he is a Spirit who himself prayeth, and, according to the import of those Hebraisms, aboundeth in that duty. As a "man of wickedness," Isa. lv. 7, or a "man of blood," is a man wholly given to wickedness and violence; so, on the other hand, a "Spirit of supplications" should be a Spirit abounding in prayer for mercy and the diverting of evil, as the word imports. Now, the Holy Ghost cannot be thus a Spirit of supplication, neither for himself nor us. No imagination of any such thing can be admitted with respect unto himself without the highest blasphemy. Nor can he in his own person make supplications for us; for besides that any such interposition in heaven on our behalf is in the Scripture wholly confined unto the priestly office of Christ and his intercession, all prayer, whether oral or interpretative only, is the act of a nature inferior unto that which is prayed unto. This the Spirit of God hath not; he hath no nature inferior unto that which is divine. We cannot, therefore, suppose him to be formally a Spirit of supplication, unless we deny his deity. He is so, therefore, efficiently with respect unto us, and as such he is promised unto us. Our inquiry, therefore, in general, is how or in what sense he is so. And there are

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but two ways conceivable whereby this may be affirmed of him:—[1.] By working *gracious inclinations* and dispositions in us unto this duty; [2.] By giving a gracious *ability* for the discharge of it in a due manner. These, therefore, must belong unto and do comprise his efficiency as a Spirit of supplication.

Both of them are included in that of the apostle, "The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us," Rom. viii. 26. Those who can put any other sense on this promise may do well to express it. Every one consistent with the analogy of faith shall be admitted, so that we do not judge the words to be void of sense and to have nothing in them. To deny the Spirit of God to be a Spirit of supplication in and unto believers is to reject the testimony of God himself.

By the ways mentioned we affirm that he is so, nor can any other way be assigned.

[1.] He is so by working *gracious inclinations* and dispositions in us unto this duty. It is he who prepareth, disposeth, and inclineth the hearts of believers unto the exercise thereof with delight and spiritual complacency. And where this is not, no prayer is acceptable unto God. He delights not in those cries which an unwilling mind is pressed or forced unto by earthly desires, distress, or misery, James iv. 3. Of ourselves, naturally, we are averse from any converse and intercourse with God, as being alienated from living unto him by the ignorance and vanity of our minds.

And there is a secret alienation still working in us from all duties of immediate communion with him. It is he alone who worketh us unto that frame wherein we pray continually, as it is required of us; our hearts being kept ready and prepared for this duty on all occasions and opportunities, being in the meantime acted and steered under the conduct and influence of those graces which are to be exercised therein. This some call the "grace of prayer" that is given us by the Holy Ghost, as I suppose improperly, though I will not contend about it; for prayer absolutely and formally is not a peculiar grace distinct from all other graces that are exercised in it, but it is the way and manner whereby we are to exercise all other graces of faith, love, delight, fear, reverence, self-abasement, and the like, unto certain especial ends. And I know no grace of prayer distinct or different from the exercise of these graces. It is, therefore, a holy commanded way of the exercise of other graces, but not a peculiar grace itself. Only, where any person is singularly disposed and devoted unto this duty, we may, if we please, though improperly, say that he is eminent in the grace of prayer. And I do suppose that this part of his work will not be denied by any, no, not that it is intended in the promise. If any are minded to stand at such a distance from other things which are ascribed unto him, or have such

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an abhorrency of allowing him part or interest in our supplications as that we may in any sense be said to pray in the Holy Ghost, that they will not admit of so much as the work of his grace, and that wrought in believers by virtue of this promise, they will manage an opposition unto his other actings at too dear a rate to be gainers by it.

[2.] He is so by giving an *ability* for prayer, or communicating a *gift* unto the minds of men, enabling them profitably unto themselves and others to exercise all his graces in that especial way of prayer. It will be granted afterward that there may be a gift of prayer used where there is no grace in exercise, nor perhaps any to be exercised,—that is, as some improperly express it, "the gift of prayer, where the grace of prayer is not;" but in declaring how the Spirit is a Spirit of supplication, we must take in the consideration of both. He both disposeth us to pray, that is, to the exercise of grace in that especial way, and enableth us thereunto. And where this ability is wholly and absolutely wanting, or where it is rejected or despised, although he may act and exercise those very graces which are to be exercised in prayer, and whose exercise in that way is commonly called the "grace of prayer," yet this work of his belongs unto the general head of sanctification, wherein he preserves, excites, and acts all our graces, and not unto this especial work of prayer, nor is he a Spirit of supplication therein. He is, therefore, only a Spirit of supplication, properly, as he communicates a gift or ability unto persons to exercise all his graces in the way and duty of prayer. This is that which he is here promised for, and promised to be poured out for; that is, to be given in an abundant and plentiful manner. Wherever he is bestowed in the accomplishment of this promise, he both disposeth the hearts of men to pray and enableth them so to do. This ability, indeed, he communicates in great variety, as to the degrees of it, and [as to its] usefulness unto others in its exercise, but he doth it unto every one so far as is necessary unto his own spiritual concernments, or the discharge of his duty towards God and all others. But whereas this assertion contains the substance of what we plead for, the farther confirmation of it must be the principal subject of the ensuing discourse.

That this is the sense of the place, and the mind of the Holy Ghost in the words, needs no other demonstration but that it is expressive of their proper signification, neither can any other sense tolerably be affixed on them. To deny the Holy Spirit to be denominated a Spirit of supplication, because he inclineth, disposeth, and enableth them to pray unto whom he is promised, and on whom he is bestowed as such, is to use a little too much liberty in sacred things.

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A learned man of late, out of hatred unto the Spirit of prayer, or prayer as his gift, hath endeavoured to deprive the church of God of the whole benefit and comfort of this promise (Amyrald. Præfat. in Psal.); for he contends that it belongs not unto the Christian church, but unto the Jews only. Had he said it belonged unto the Jews in the first place who should be converted unto Christ, he had not gone so wide from the truth nor from the sense of other expositors, though he had said more than he could prove. But to suppose that any grace, any mercy, any privilege by Jesus Christ, is promised unto the Jews, wherein Gentile believers shall be no sharers, that they should not partake of the same kind, whoever hath the prerogative as to degrees, is fond and impious; for if they also are children of Abraham, if the blessing of faithful Abraham do come upon them also, if it is through them that he is the heir of the world, his spiritual seed inhabiting it by right in all places, then unto them do all the promises belong that are made unto him and his seed. And whereas most of the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Old Testament are made to Jacob and Israel, to Jerusalem and Zion, it is but saying that they are all confined unto the Jews, and so at once to despoil the church of God of all right and title to them; which impious folly and sacrilege hath been by some attempted. But whereas all the promises belong unto the same covenant, with all the grace contained in them and exhibited by them, whoever is interested by faith in that covenant is so in all the promises of God that belong thereunto, and hath an equal right unto them with those unto whom they were first given. To suppose, now that the Jews are rejected for their unbelief, that the promises of God made unto them whilst they stood by faith are ceased and of no use, is to overthrow the covenant of Abraham, and, indeed, the whole truth of the New Testament. But the apostle assures us that "all the promises of God in Christ are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us;" that is, in their accomplishment in us and towards us, 2 Cor. i. 20. So, also, he positively affirms that all believers have received those promises which originally were made unto Israel, 2 Cor. vi. 16–18, vii. 1. And not only so, but he declareth also that the promises which were made of old unto particular persons on especial occasions, as to the grace, power, and love contained in them and intended by them, do yet belong unto all individual believers, and are applicable by them unto all their especial occasions, Heb. xiii. 5, 6. And their right unto or interest in all the promises of God is that which those who are concerned in the obedience of faith would not forego for all that this world can supply them withal. This, therefore, is only a particular instance of the work and effect of the Spirit, as he is in general promised in the covenant. And, as

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we have declared, the promises of him as a Spirit of grace and holiness in the covenant belong unto the believers of the Gentiles also. If they do not, they have neither share nor interest in Christ; which is a better plea for the Jew than this peculiar instance will afford. But this promise is only an especial declaration of what in one case this Spirit shall do, who is promised as a Spirit of grace and holiness in the covenant. And, therefore, the author of the evasion, suspecting that the fraud and sacrilege of it would be detected, betakes himself to other subterfuges, which we shall afterward meet with, so far as we are concerned.

It may be more soberly objected, "That the Spirit of grace and supplication was given unto believers under the Old Testament; and, therefore, if there be no more in it, if some extraordinary gift be not here intended, how comes it to be made an especial promise with respect unto the times of the New Testament? It may, therefore, be supposed that not the ordinary grace or gift of prayer, which believers, and especially the officers of the church, do receive, but some extraordinary gift bestowed on the apostles and first converts to the church, is here intended. So the prophecy concerning the effusion of the Spirit on all sorts of persons, Joel ii. 28–32, is interpreted by Peter, and applied unto the sending of the Holy Ghost in miraculous gifts on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 14–21."

Ans. 1. I have elsewhere already, in general, obviated this objection by showing the prodigious folly of that imagination, that the dispensation of the Spirit is confined unto the first times of the gospel; whereof this objection is a branch, as *enmity* unto the matter treated of is the occasion of the whole. 2. We nowhere find *grace* and *prayer*, the things here promised, to be reckoned among the *extraordinary gifts* of the Spirit under the New Testament. Prayer, indeed, in an unknown tongue was so; but prayer itself was not so, no more than grace; which if it were, the whole present church is graceless. 3. The promise in Joel had express respect unto the extraordinary gifts of *prophecy* and *visions*, and therefore had its principal accomplishment on the day of Pentecost. This promise is quite of another nature. 4. That which is necessary for and the duty of all believers, and that always, is not an *extraordinary gift*, bestowed on a few for a season. Now, if there are any who think that grace and prayer are not necessary unto all believers, or that they may have abilities, and exercise them, without any aid of the Holy Spirit, I will not at present contend with them; for this is not a place to plead with those by whom the principles of the Christian faith are denied. Divine commands are the rule of our duty, not man's imaginations. 5. If this be not an especial promise of the New Testament, because the matter of it, or grace promised, was in

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some degree and measure enjoyed under the Old, then is there no promise made with respect unto that season; for the saints under the Old Testament were really made partakers of all the same graces with those under the New. Wherefore, 6. Two things are intended in the promise with respect unto the times of the gospel:—(1.) *An ampliation and enlargement* of this grace or favour, as unto the subjects of it *extensively*. It was under the Old Testament confined unto a few, but now it shall be communicated unto many, and diffused all the world over. It shall be so poured out as to be shed abroad, and imparted thereby unto many. That which before was but as the watering of a garden by an especial hand is now as the clouds pouring themselves forth on the whole face of the earth. (2.) An *increase of the degrees* of spiritual abilities for the performance of it, Tit. iii. 5, 6. There is now a rich communication of the Spirit of grace and prayer granted unto believers in comparison of what was enjoyed under the Old Testament. This the very nature of the dispensation of the gospel, wherein we receive from Jesus Christ "grace for grace," doth evince and confirm. I suppose it needless to prove that, as unto all spiritual supplies of grace, there is brought in an *abundant* administration of it by Jesus Christ, the whole Scripture testifying unto it.

There were, indeed, under the Old Testament, prayers to and praises of God dictated by a Spirit of prophecy, and received by immediate divine revelation, containing mysteries for the instruction of the church in all ages. These prayers were not suggested unto them by the aid of the Spirit as a Spirit of supplication, but dictated in and to them by the Spirit as a Spirit of prophecy. Nor did they themselves comprehend the mind of the Holy Spirit in them fully, but inquired diligently thereinto, as into other prophecies given out by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, 1 Pet. i. 10–12;—an instance whereof we may have in Ps. xxii.; a prayer it is with thanksgiving from first to last. Now, although David, unto whom it was given by inspiration, might find in his own condition things that had some low and mean resemblance of what was intended in the words suggested unto him by the Holy Spirit, as he was a type of Christ, yet the depth of the mysteries contained therein, the principal scope and design of the Holy Ghost, was in a great measure concealed from himself, and much more from others. Only it was given out unto the church by immediate inspiration, that believers might search and diligently inquire into what was signified and foretold therein; that so thereby they might be gradually led into the knowledge of the mysteries of God, according as he was pleased graciously to communicate of his saving light unto them. But withal it was revealed unto David and the other prophets, that in these things "they did

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not minister unto themselves, but unto us," as having mysteries in them which they could not, which they were not to comprehend. But as this gift is ceased under the New Testament, after the finishing of the canon of the Scripture, nor is it by any pretended unto, so was it confined of old unto a very few inspired persons, and belongs not unto our present inquiry; for we speak only of those things which are common unto all believers, and herein a preference must in all things be given unto those under the New Testament.

If, therefore, it could be proved, which I know it cannot be, that the generality of the church under the Old Testament made use of any *forms of prayers*, as mere forms of prayer, without any other end, use, or mystical instruction (all which concurred in their prophetical composures), for the sole end of prayer, yet would it not, whatever any pretend or plead, thence follow that believers under the New Testament may do the same, much less that they may be obliged always so to do; for there is now a more plentiful and rich effusion of the Spirit of grace and supplication upon them than was upon those of old. And as our duty is to be regulated by God's commands, so God's commands are suited unto the dispensation of his grace. For persons under the New Testament, who are commanded to pray, not to make use constantly in their so doing of the gifts, aids, and assistances of the Spirit, which are peculiarly dispensed and communicated therein, on pretence of what was done under the Old, is to reject the grace of the gospel, and to make themselves guilty of the highest ingratitude. Wherefore, although we may and ought to bear with them who, having not received any thing of this promised grace and assistance, nor believing there is any such thing, do plead for the use of forms of prayer to be composed by some and read by others or themselves, and that only, in the discharge of this duty; yet such as have been made partakers of this grace, and who own it their duty constantly to use and improve the promised aids of the Spirit of God, will be careful not to admit of any such principles or practice as would plainly annihilate the promise.

Thus much, then, we may suppose ourselves to have obtained in the consideration of this testimony, *That God hath promised under the New Testament to give unto believers, in a plentiful manner or measure, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, or his own Holy Spirit, enabling them to pray according to his mind and will.* The way and manner of his work therein shall be afterward declared. And it may suffice to oppose, in general, this one promise unto the open reproaches and bold contempts that are by many cast on the Spirit of prayer; whose framers, unless they can blot this text out of the Scripture, will fail at last in their design. We shall not, therefore, need to plead any other testimony to the same purpose in the

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way of promises. Only we may observe, that this being expressly assigned as a part of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit, as promised under the New Testament, there is no one promise to that purpose wherein this grace is not included; therefore, the known multiplication of them addeth strength unto our argument.

CHAPTER III.

Gal. iv. 6 opened and vindicated.

THE next general evidence given unto the truth under consideration is the account of the *accomplishment* of this promise under the New Testament, where also the nature of the operation of the Holy Spirit herein is in general expressed; and this is Gal. iv. 6, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." An account, as was said, is here given of the *accomplishment* of the promise before explained; and sundry things may be considered in the words:—

First, The *subjects* on whom he is bestowed, and in whom he worketh, are believers, or those who by the Spirit of adoption are made the children of God. We receive the adoption of sons; and because we are sons, he sendeth his Spirit into our hearts. And this privilege of adoption we obtain by faith in Christ Jesus: John i. 12, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Secondly, there is an especial appellation or description of the Spirit as promised and given unto this purpose,—he is the "Spirit of the Son." That the original ground and reason hereof is his eternal relation to the Son, as proceeding from him, hath been elsewhere evinced; but there is something more particular here intended. He is called the "Spirit of the Son" with respect unto his communication to believers. There is, therefore, included herein that especial regard unto Jesus Christ the Son of God which is in the work mentioned, as it is an evangelical mercy and privilege. He is, therefore, called the "Spirit of the Son," not only because of his *eternal procession* from him, but,—1. Because he was in the first place *given unto him*, as the head of the church, for the unction, consecration, and sanctification of his human nature. Here he laid the foundation, and gave an example of what he was to do in and towards all his members. 2. It is immediately from and by him that he is *communicated* unto us, and that two ways:—(1.) *Authoritatively*, by virtue of the covenant between the Father and him, whereon, upon his accomplishment of the work of the mediation in a state of humiliation,

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according to it, he "received the promise of the Holy Ghost;" that is, power and authority to bestow him on whom he would, for all the ends of that mediation, Acts ii. 33, v. 32. (2.) *Formally*, in that all the graces of the Spirit are derived unto us from him, as the head of the church, as the spring of all spiritual life, in whom they were all treasured and laid up unto that purpose, Col. i. 19, ii. 19; Eph. iv. 16; Col. iii. 1–4.

Secondly, The work of this Spirit in general, as bestowed on believers, is partly included, partly expressed, in these words. In general (which is included) he enables them to behave themselves suitably unto that state and condition whereinto they are taken upon their faith in Christ Jesus. They are made children of God by adoption, and it is meet they be taught to carry themselves as becomes that new relation. "Because ye are sons, he hath given you the Spirit of his Son;" without which they cannot walk before him as becometh sons. He teacheth them to bear and behave themselves no longer as foreigners and strangers, nor as servants only, but as "children" and "heirs of God," Rom. viii. 15, 17. He endoweth them with a frame and disposition of heart unto holy, filial obedience; for as he takes away the distance, making them to be nigh who were aliens and far from God, so he removes that fear, dread, and bondage, which they are kept in who are under the power of the law: 2 Tim. i. 7, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" not "the spirit of fear," or a "spirit of bondage unto fear," as Rom. viii. 15,—that is, in and by the efficacy of the law, filling our minds with dread, and such considerations of God as will keep us at a distance from him. But he is in the sons, on whom he is bestowed, a Spirit of *power*, strengthening and enabling them unto all duties of obedience. This Πνεῦμα δυνάμεως is that whereby we are enabled to obedience, which the apostle gives thanks for, 1 Tim. i. 12, Χάριν ἔχω τῷ ἐνδυναμώσαντί με Χριστῷ, "To Christ that enableth me;" that is, by his Spirit of power: for without the Spirit of adoption we have not the least strength or power to behave ourselves as sons in the family of God. And he is also, as thus bestowed, a Spirit of *love*, who worketh in us that love unto God and that delight in him which becometh children towards their heavenly Father. This is the first genuine consequent of this relation. There may be many duties performed unto God where there is no true love to him, at least no love unto him as a Father in Christ, which alone is genuine and accepted. And, lastly, he is also a Spirit σωφρονισμοῦ, of a *modest*, grave, and sober mind. Even children are apt to wax wanton, and curious, and proud in their Father's house; but the Spirit enables them to behave themselves with that sobriety, modesty, and humility, which becometh the family

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of God. And in these three things, *spiritual power, love,* and *sobriety* of mind, consists the whole deportment of the children of God in his family. This is the state and condition of those who, by the effectual working of the Spirit of adoption, are delivered from the "spirit of bondage unto fear," which the apostle discourseth of, Rom. viii. 15.

Those who are under the power of that Spirit, or that *efficacious working of the Spirit by the law,* cannot, by virtue of any aids or assistance, make their addresses unto him by prayer in a due manner; for although the means whereby they are brought into this state be the Spirit of God acting upon their souls and consciences by the law, yet formally, as they are in the state of nature, the spirit whereby they are acted is the unclean "spirit of the world," or the influence of him who "ruleth in the children of disobedience." The law that they obey is the "law of the members" mentioned by the apostle, Rom. vii. 23. The works which they perform are the "unfruitful works of darkness;" and the fruits of these unfruitful works are "sin" and "death." Being under this bondage, they have no power to approach unto God; and their bondage tending unto fear, they can have no delight in an access unto him. Whatever other provisions or preparations such persons may have for this duty, they can never perform it unto the glory of God, or so as to find acceptance with him. With those who are delivered from this state, all things are otherwise. The Spirit whereby they are acted is the Spirit of God,—the Spirit of adoption, of power, love, and a sound mind. The law which they are under obedience unto is the holy law of God, as written in the fleshy tables of their hearts. The effects of it are faith and love, with all other graces of the Spirit; whereof they receive the fruits in peace, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Thirdly, An instance is given of his effectually working these things in the adopted sons of God, in the *duty of prayer* crying, "Abba, Father." The object of the especial duty intended is "God, even the Father," Eph. ii. 18. "Abba, ὁ Πατήρ." Abba is the Syriac or Chaldee name for Father, then in common use among the Jews, and Πατήρ was the same name amongst the Greeks or Gentiles; so that the common interest of Jews and Gentiles in this privilege may be intended, or rather, a holy boldness and intimate confidence of love is designed in the reduplication of the name. The Jews have a saying in the Babylonian Talmud, in the Treatise of Blessings, העבדים וחשפחות אין קורין אותם לא אבא פלוני ולא אמא פלונית,—"Servants and handmaids" (that is, bond-servants) "do not call on such a one Abba or Ymma." Freedom of state, with a right unto adoption, whereof they are incapable, is required unto this liberty and confidence. God gives unto his adopted sons רוּחַ נְדִיבָה, "a free Spirit," Ps.

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li. 12,—a Spirit of gracious, filial ingenuity. This is that Spirit which cries "Abba." That is the word whereby those who were adopted did first salute their fathers, to testify their affection and obedience. For "abba" signifies not only "father," but "my father;" for אַבִּי, "my father," in the Hebrew, is rendered by the Chaldee paraphrast only אַבָּא, "abba." See Gen. xix. 34, and elsewhere constantly. To this purpose speaks Chrysostom: Βουλόμενος δεῖξαι γνησιότητα, καὶ τῇ τῶν Ἑβραίων ἐχρήσατο γλώσσῃ· οὐ γὰρ εἶπε μόνον ὁ πατὴρ ἀλλ' ἀββᾶ ὁ πατήρ, ὅπερ τῶν παίδων μάλιστά ἐστι τῶν γνησίων πρὸς πατέρα ῥῆμα·—"Being willing to show the ingenuity" (that is in this duty), "he useth also the language of the Hebrews, and says not only 'Father,' but 'Abba, Father;' which is a word proper unto them who are highly ingenuous."

And this he effecteth two ways:—1. By the excitation of graces and gracious affections in their souls in this duty, especially those of faith, love, and delight. 2. By enabling them to exercise those graces and express those affections in vocal prayer; for κράζον denotes not only crying, but an earnestness of mind expressed in vocal prayer. It is praying φωνῇ μεγάλῃ, as it is said of our Saviour, Matt. xxvii. 50; for the whole of our duty in our supplications is expressed herein. Now, we are not concerned, or do not at present inquire, what course they take, what means they employ, or what helps they use in prayer, who are not as yet partakers of this privilege of adoption. It is only those who are so whom the Spirit of God assists in this duty; and the only question is, what such persons are to do in compliance with his assistance, or what it is that they obtain thereby.

And we may compare the different expressions used by the apostle in this matter, whereby the general nature of the work of the Spirit herein will farther appear. In this place he saith, "God hath sent forth into our hearts τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ κράζον,—the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father." Rom. viii. 15, he saith we have received τὸ Πνεῦμα υἱοθεσίας, ἐν ᾧ κράζομεν, "the Spirit of adoption,"—the Spirit of the Son, given us because we are sons,—"whereby," or in whom, "we cry, Abba, Father." His acting in us, and our acting by him, are expressed by the same word; and the inquiry here is, how, in the same duty, he is said to "cry" in us, and we are said to "cry" in him. And there can be no reason hereof but only because the same work is both his and ours in diverse respects. As it is an act of *grace* and spiritual power it is his, or it is wrought in us by him alone. As it is a *duty* performed by us, by virtue of his assistance, it is ours,—by him we cry, "Abba, Father;" and to deny his actings in our duties is to overthrow the gospel. And it is prayer formally considered, and as comprising the gift of it, with its outward exercise, which is in-

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tended. The mere excitation of the graces of faith, love, trust, delight, desire, self-abasement, and the like animating principles of prayer, cannot be expressed by crying, though it be included in it. Their actual exercise in prayer, formally considered, is that which is ascribed unto the Spirit of God. And they seem to deal somewhat severely with the church of God and all believers who will not allow that the work here expressly assigned unto the Spirit of adoption, or of the Son, is sufficient for its end, or the discharge of this duty, either in private or in the assemblies of the church. There is no more required unto prayer either way but our crying, "Abba, Father," —that is, the making our requests known unto him as our Father in Christ,—with supplications and thanksgivings, according as our state and occasions do require. And is not the aid of the Spirit of God sufficient to enable us hereunto? It was so of old, and that unto all believers, according as they were called unto this duty, with respect unto their persons, families, or the church of God. If it be not so now, it is either because God will not now communicate his Spirit unto his children or sons, according to the promise of the gospel; or because, indeed, this grace and gift of his is by men despised, neglected, and lost;—and the former cannot be asserted on any safe grounds whatever; the latter it is our interest to consider.

This twofold testimony, concerning the promise of the communication of the Holy Spirit or a Spirit of supplication unto believers under the New Testament, and the accomplishment of it, doth sufficiently evince our general assertion, that there is a *peculiar work or special gracious operation of the Holy Ghost in the prayers of believers enabling them thereunto;* for we intend no more hereby but that as they do receive him by virtue of that promise (which the world cannot do), in order unto his gracious efficiency in the duty of supplication, so he doth actually incline, dispose, and enable them to cry "Abba, Father," or to call upon God in prayer as their Father by Jesus Christ. To deny this, therefore, is to rise up in contradiction unto the express testimony of God himself, and by our unbelief to make him a liar. And had we nothing farther to plead in this cause, this were abundantly sufficient to reprove the petulant folly of them by whom this work of the Holy Ghost, and the duty of believers thereon to "pray in the Spirit,"—if we may use the despised and blasphemed expressions of the Scripture,—is scorned and derided.

For as to the ability of prayer which is thus received, some there are who know no more of it, as exercised in a way of duty, but the outside, shell, and appearance of it; and that not from their own experience, but from what they [have] observed in others. Of these there

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are not a few who confidently affirm that it is wholly a work of fancy, invention, memory, and wit, accompanied with some boldness and elocution, unjustly fathered on the Spirit of God, who is no way concerned therein; and, it may be, they do persuade many, no better skilled in these things than themselves, that so it is indeed. Howbeit, those who have any experience of the real aids and assistances of the Spirit of God in this work and duty, any faith in the express testimonies given by God himself hereunto, cannot but despise such fabulous imaginations. You may as soon persuade them that the sun doth not give light, nor the fire heat, that they see not with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, as that the Spirit of God doth not enable them to pray, or assist them in their supplications. And there might some probability be given unto these pretences, and unto the total exclusion of the Holy Ghost from any concernment herein, if those concerning whom and their duties they thus judge were generally persons known to excel others in those natural endowments and acquired abilities whereunto this faculty of prayer is ascribed. But will this be allowed by them who make use of this pretence,—namely, that those who are thus able to pray, as they pretend, by virtue of a spiritual gift, are persons excelling in fancy, memory, wit, invention, and elocution? It is known that they will admit of no such thing; but in all other instances they must be represented as dull, stupid, ignorant, unlearned, and brutish: only in prayer they have the advantage of those natural endowments! These things are hardly consistent with common ingenuity; for is it not strange that those who are so contemptible with respect unto natural and acquired endowments in all other things, whether of science or of prudence, should yet in this one duty or work of prayer so improve them as to outgo the imitation of them [by those] by whom they are despised? for as they *do* not, as they *will* not, pray as they do, so their own hearts tell them they *cannot;* which is the true reason why they so despitefully oppose this praying in the Spirit, whatever pride or passion pretends to the contrary. But things of this nature will again occur unto us, and therefore shall not be here farther insisted on. Having, therefore, proved that God hath promised a plentiful dispensation of his Spirit unto believers under the New Testament, to enable them to pray according unto his mind, and that, in general, this promise is accomplished in and towards all the children of God, it remaineth, in the second place, as to what we have proposed, that we declare *what is the work of the Holy Ghost in them* unto this end and purpose, or how he is unto us a Spirit of prayer or supplication.

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CHAPTER IV.

The nature of prayer—Rom. viii. 26 opened and vindicated.

PRAYER at present I take to be a *gift, ability, or spiritual faculty of exercising faith, love, reverence, fear, delight, and other graces, in a way of vocal requests, supplications, and praises unto God:* "In every thing ..... let your requests be made known unto God," Phil. iv. 6.

This gift and ability I affirm to be bestowed, and this work by virtue thereof to be wrought in us, by the Holy Ghost, in the accomplishment of the promise insisted on, so crying "Abba, Father," in them that do believe. And this is that which we are to give an account of; wherein we shall assert nothing but what the Scripture plainly goeth before us in, and what the experience of believers, duly exercised in duties of obedience, doth confirm. And in the issue of our endeavour we shall leave it unto the judgment of God and his church, whether they are "ecstatical, enthusiastical, unaccountable raptures" that we plead for, or a real gracious effect and work of the Holy Spirit of God.

The first thing we ascribe unto the Spirit herein is, that he supplieth and furnisheth the mind with a due comprehension of *the matter of prayer*, or what ought, both in general and as unto all our particular occasions, to be prayed for. Without this I suppose it will be granted that no man can pray as he ought; for how can any man pray that knows not what to pray for? Where there is not a comprehension hereof, the very nature and being of prayer is destroyed. And herein the testimony of the apostle is express: Rom. viii. 26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

It is that expression only which at present I urge, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." This is generally supposed to be otherwise,—namely, that men know well enough what they ought to pray for; only they are wicked and careless, and will not pray for what they know they ought so to do. I shall make no excuse or apology for the wickedness and carelessness of men; which, without doubt, are abominable. But yet I must abide by the truth asserted by the apostle, which I shall farther evidence immediately,—namely, that without the especial aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit no man knoweth what to pray for as he ought.

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But yet there is another relief in this matter, and so no need of any work of the Holy Ghost therein. And we shall be accounted impudent if we ascribe any thing unto him whereof there is the least colourable pretence that it may be otherwise effected or provided for. So great an unwillingness is there to allow him either place, work, or office in the Christian religion or the practice of it! Wherefore, it is pretended that although men do not of themselves know what to pray for, yet this defect may be supplied in a prescript form of words, prepared on purpose to teach and confine men unto what they are to pray for.

We may, therefore, dismiss the Holy Spirit and his assistance as unto this concernment of prayer; for the due matter of it may be so set down and fixed on ink and paper that the meanest capacity cannot miss of his duty therein! This, therefore, is that which is to be tried in our ensuing discourse,—namely, that whereas it is plainly affirmed that "we know not" of ourselves "what we should pray for as we ought" (which I judge to be universally true as unto all persons, as well those who prescribe prayers as those unto whom they are prescribed), and that the Holy Spirit helps and relieveth us herein, whether we may or ought to relinquish and neglect his assistance, and so to rely only on such supplies as are invented or used unto that end for which he is promised; that is, plainly, whether the word of God be to be trusted unto in this matter or not.

It is true, that whatever we ought to pray for is declared in the Scripture, yea, and summarily comprised in the Lord's Prayer; but it is one thing to have what we ought to pray for in the book, another thing to have it in our minds and hearts,—without which it will never be unto us the due matter of prayer. It is out of the "abundance of the heart" that the mouth must speak in this matter, Matt. xii. 34. There is, therefore, in us a threefold defect with respect unto the matter of prayer, which is supplied by the Holy Spirit, and can be so no other way nor by any other means; and therein is he unto us a Spirit of supplication according to the promise.

For,—1. *We know not our own wants;* 2. *We know not the supplies of them that are expressed in the promises of God;* and, 3. *We know not the end whereunto what we pray for is to be directed,* which I add unto the former. Without the knowledge and understanding of all these, no man can pray as he ought; and we can no way know them but by the aid and assistance of the Spirit of grace. And if these things be manifest, it will be evident how in this first instance we are enabled to pray by the Holy Ghost.

First, Our *wants,* as they are to be the *matter of prayer,* may be referred unto three heads, and none of them of ourselves do we

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know aright, so as to make them the due subject of our supplications, and of some of them we know nothing at all:—

1. This first consists in our *outward straits*, pressures, and difficulties, which we desire to be delivered from, with all other temporal things wherein we are concerned. In those things it should seem wondrously clear that of ourselves we know what to pray for. But the truth is, whatever our sense may be of them and our natural desires about them, yet *how* and *when*, under what conditions and limitations, with what frame of heart and spirit, [with] what submission unto the pleasure of God, they are to be made the matter of our prayers, we know not. Therefore doth God call the prayers of most about them "howling," and not a crying unto him with the heart, Hos. vii. 14. There is, indeed, a voice of nature crying in its distress unto the God of nature, but that is not the duty of evangelical prayer which we inquire after; and men ofttimes most miss it when they think themselves most ready and prepared. To know our temporal wants so as to make them the matter of prayer according to the mind of God requires more wisdom than of ourselves we are furnished withal; for "who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow?" Eccles. vi. 12; and ofttimes believers are never more at a loss than how to pray aright about temporal things. No man is in pain or distress, or under any wants, whose continuance would be destructive to his being, but he may, yea, he ought to make deliverance from them the matter of his prayer. So in that case he knows in some measure, or in general, what he ought to pray for, without any peculiar spiritual illumination. But yet the circumstances of those things, and wherein their respect unto the glory of God and the supreme end or chiefest good of the persons concerned doth stand (with regard whereunto they can alone be made the matter of prayer acceptable unto God in Christ), are that which of themselves they cannot understand, but have need of an interest in that promise made to the church, that "they shall be all taught of God;" and this is so much more in such things as belong only unto the conveniences of this life, whereof no man of himself knows what is good for him or useful unto him.

2. We have *internal wants* that are discerned in the light of a *natural conscience:* such is the *guilt of sin*, whereof that accuseth,—sins against natural light and the plain outward letter of the law. These things we know somewhat of without any especial aid of the Holy Spirit, Rom. ii. 14, 15, and desires of deliverance are inseparable from them. But we may observe here two things:—(1.) That the knowledge which we have hereof of ourselves is so *dark* and *confused* as that we are no ways able thereby to manage our *wants*

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in prayer aright unto God. A natural conscience, awakened and excited by afflictions or other providential visitations, will discover itself in unfeigned and severe reflections of guilt upon the soul; but until the Spirit doth convince of sin, all things are in such disorder and confusion in the mind that no man knows how to make his address unto God about it in a due manner. And there is more required, to treat aright with God about the guilt of sin, than a mere sense of it. So far as men can proceed under that sole conduct and guidance, the heathens went in dealing with their supposed gods, without a due respect unto the propitiation made by the blood of Christ. Yea, prayer about the guilt of sin, discerned in the light of a natural conscience, is but an "abomination." Besides, (2.) We all know how small a portion of the concernment of believers doth lie in those things which fall under the light and determination of a natural conscience; for,—

3. The things about which believers do and ought to treat principally and deal with God, in their supplications, are the *inward spiritual frames and dispositions of their souls*, with the actings of grace and sin in them. Hereon David was not satisfied with the confession of his original and all known actual sins, Ps. li. 1–5; nor yet with an acknowledgment that "none knoweth his own wanderings," whence he desireth cleansing from "unknown sins," Ps. xix. 12; but, moreover, he begs of God to undertake the inward search of his heart, to find out what was amiss or [not] right in him, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24, as knowing that God principally required "truth in the inward parts," Ps. li. 6. Such is the carrying on of the work of sanctification in the whole spirit and soul, 1 Thess. v. 23.

The inward sanctification of all our faculties is what we want and pray for. Supplies of grace from God unto this purpose, with a sense of the power, guilt, violence, and deceit of sin, in its inward actings in the mind and affections, with other things innumerable thereunto belonging, make up the principal matter of prayer as formally supplication.

Add hereunto that unto the matter of prayer, taken largely for the whole duty so called, every thing wherein we have intercourse with God in faith and love doth belong. The acknowledgment of the whole mystery of his wisdom, grace, and love in Christ Jesus, with all the fruits, effects, and benefits which thence we do receive; all the workings and actings of our souls towards him, with their faculties and affections; in brief, every thing and every conception of our minds wherein our spiritual access unto the throne of grace doth consist, or which doth belong thereunto, with all occasions and emergencies of spiritual life, are in like manner comprised herein. And that we can have such an acquaintance with these things as to

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manage them acceptably in our supplications, without the grace of spiritual illumination from the Holy Ghost, few are so ignorant or profane as to assert. Some, I confess, seem to be strangers unto these things, which yet renders them not of the less weight or moment.

But hence it comes to pass that the prayers of believers about them, especially their confessions of what sense they have of the power and guilt of the inward actings of sin, have been by some exceedingly traduced and reproached; for whereas they cannot out of their ignorance understand such things, out of their pride, heightened by sensuality of life, they despise and contemn them.

Secondly, The *matter of prayer* may be considered with respect unto the promises of God. These are the measure of prayer, and contain the matter of it. What God hath promised, all that he hath promised, and nothing else, are we to pray for; for "secret things belong unto the LORD our God" alone, but the declaration of his will and grace belongs unto us, and is our rule. Wherefore, there is nothing that we really do or may stand in need of but God hath promised the supply of it, in such a way and under such limitations as may make it good and useful unto us; and there is nothing that God hath promised but we stand in need of it, or are some way or other concerned in it as members of the mystical body of Christ. Wherefore, "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," unless we know or understand the goodness, grace, kindness, and mercy, that is prepared and proposed in the promises of God; for how should we, seeing we are to pray for all that God hath promised, and for nothing but what God hath promised, and as he hath promised it? The inquiry, therefore, that remains is, whether we of ourselves, without the especial assistance of the Holy Spirit, do understand these things or no. The apostle tells us that the "things of God," spiritual things, "knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God;" and that we must receive the Spirit which is of God to know the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12; which are the grace, mercy, love, and kindness of the promises, 2 Cor. vii. 1. To say that of ourselves we can perceive, understand, and comprehend these things, without the especial assistance of the Holy Ghost, is to overthrow the whole gospel and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as hath been elsewhere demonstrated.

But it may be it will be said, "There is more stir than needs made in this matter. God help poor sinners, if all this be required unto their prayers! Certainly men may pray at a cheaper rate, and with much less trouble, or very few will continue long in that duty." For some can see no necessity of thus understanding the grace and mercy

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that is in the promises unto prayer, and suppose that men know well enough what to pray for without it.

But those who so speak neither know what it is to pray, nor, it seems, are willing to learn; for we are to pray in faith, Rom. x. 14, and faith respects God's promises, Heb. iv. 1, Rom. iv. If, therefore, we understand not what God hath promised, we cannot pray at all. It is marvellous what thoughts such persons have of God and themselves, who, without a due comprehension of their own wants, and without an understanding of God's promises, wherein all their supplies are laid up, do "say their prayers," as they call it, continually. And indeed in the poverty, or rather misery, of devised aids of prayer, this is not the least pernicious effect or consequent, that they keep men off from searching the promises of God, whereby they might know what to pray for. Let the matter of prayer be so prescribed unto men as that they shall never need either to search their own hearts or God's promises about it, and this whole work is despatched out of the way. But then is the soul prepared aright for this duty, and then only, when it understands its own condition, the supplies of grace provided in the promises, the suitableness of those supplies unto its wants, and the means of its conveyance unto us by Jesus Christ. That all this we have by the Spirit, and not otherwise, shall be immediately declared.

Thirdly, Unto the *matter* of prayer, I join the *end* we aim at in the things we pray for, and which we direct them unto. And herein, also, are we in ourselves at a loss; and men may lose all the benefit of their prayers by proposing undue ends unto themselves in the things they pray for. Our Saviour saith, "Ask, and ye shall receive;" but the apostle James affirms of some, chap. iv. 3, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it on your pleasures." To pray for any thing, and not expressly unto the end whereunto of God it is designed, is to ask amiss, and to no purpose; and yet, whatever confidence we may have of our own wisdom and integrity, if we are left unto ourselves, without the especial guidance of the Spirit of God, our aims will never be suited unto the will of God. The ways and means whereby we may fail, and do so in this kind, when not under the actual conduct of the Spirit of God,—that is, when our own natural and distempered affections do immix themselves in our supplications,—are innumerable. And there is nothing so excellent in itself, so useful unto us, so acceptable unto God, in the matter of prayer, but it may be vitiated, corrupted, and prayer itself rendered vain, by an application of it unto false or mistaken ends. And what is the work of the Spirit to guide us herein we shall see in its proper place.

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CHAPTER V.

The work of the Holy Spirit as to the matter of prayer.

THESE things are considerable as to the *matter of prayer;* and with respect unto them, of ourselves *we know not what* we should pray for, nor *how*, nor *when*. And the first work of the Spirit of God, as a *Spirit of supplication* in believers, is to give them an understanding of all their *wants*, and of the *supplies* of grace and mercy in the promises, causing [such] a sense of them to dwell and abide on their minds as that, according unto their measure, they are continually furnished with the *matter of prayer*, without which men *never* pray, and by which, in some sense, they pray *always;* for,—

First, He alone doth, and he alone is able to give us such an understanding of our *own wants* as that we may be able to make our thoughts about them *known unto God* in prayer and supplication. And what is said concerning our wants is so likewise with respect unto the whole matter of prayer, whereby we give glory to God, either in requests or prayers. And this I shall manifest in some instances, whereunto others may be reduced.

1. The *principal matter* of our prayers concerneth *faith and unbelief*. So the apostles prayed in a particular manner, "Lord, increase our faith;" and so the poor man prayed in his distress, "Lord, help thou mine unbelief." I cannot think that they ever pray aright who never pray for the pardon of unbelief, for the removal of it, and for the increase of faith. If unbelief be the greatest of sins, and if faith be the greatest of the gifts of God, we are not Christians if these things are not one principal part of the matter of our prayers. Unto this end we must be convinced of the nature and guilt of unbelief, as also of the nature and use of faith; nor without that conviction do we either know our own chiefest wants, or what to pray for as we ought. And that this is the especial work of the Holy Ghost our Saviour expressly declares, John xvi. 8, 9, "He will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me." I do and must deny that any one is or can be convinced of the nature and guilt of that unbelief, either in the whole or in the remainders of it, which the gospel condemneth, and which is the great condemning sin under the gospel, without an especial work of the Holy Ghost on his mind and soul; for unbelief, as it respecteth Jesus Christ,—not believing in him, or not believing in him as we ought,—is a sin against the gospel, and it is by the gospel alone that we may be convinced of it, and that as it is the ministration of the Spirit. Wherefore, neither the light of a natural conscience nor the law will convince any one of the guilt

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of unbelief with respect unto Jesus Christ, nor instruct them in the nature of faith in him. No innate notions of our minds, no doctrines of the law, will reach hereunto. And to think to teach men to pray, or to help them out in praying, without a sense of unbelief, or the remainders of it, in its guilt and power, the nature of faith, with its necessity, use, and efficacy, is to say unto the naked and the hungry, "Be ye warmed and filled," and not give them those things that are needful to the body. This, therefore, belongs unto the work of the Spirit as a Spirit of supplication. And let men tear and tire themselves night and day with a multitude of prayers, if a work of the Spirit of God in teaching the nature and guilt of unbelief, and the nature, efficacy, and use of faith in Christ Jesus, go not with it, all will be lost and perish. And yet it is marvellous to consider how little mention of these things occurreth in most of those compositions which have been published to be used as forms of prayer. They are generally omitted in such endeavours, as if they were things wherein Christians were very little concerned. The gospel positively and frequently determines the present acceptation of men with God or their disobedience, with their future salvation and condemnation, according unto their faith or unbelief; for their obedience or disobedience are infallible consequents thereon. Now, if things that are of the greatest importance unto us, and whereon all other things wherein our spiritual estate is concerned do depend, be not a part of the subject-matter of our daily prayer, I know not what deserveth so to be.

2. The *matter* of our prayer respects the *depravation of our nature*, and our wants on that account. The darkness and ignorance that is in our understandings; our unacquaintedness with heavenly things, and alienation from the life of God thereby; the secret workings of the lusts of the mind under the shade and covert of this darkness; the stubbornness, obstinacy, and perverseness of our wills by nature, with their reluctancies unto and dislike of things spiritual, with innumerable latent guiles thence arising,—all keeping the soul from a due conformity unto the holiness of God,—are things which believers have an especial regard unto in their confessions and supplications. They know this to be their duty, and find by experience that the greatest concernment between God and their souls, as to sin and holiness, doth lie in these things; and they are never more jealous over themselves than when they find their hearts least affected with them. And to give over treating with God about them,—for mercy in their pardon, for grace in their removal, and the daily renovation of the image of God in them thereby,—is to renounce all religion and all designs of living unto God.

Wherefore, without a knowledge, a sense, a due comprehension of

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these things, no man can pray as he ought, because he is unacquainted with the matter of prayer, and knows not what to pray for. But this knowledge we cannot attain of ourselves. Nature is so corrupted as not to understand its own depravation. Hence some absolutely deny this corruption of it, so taking away all necessity of labouring after its cure and the renovation of the image of God in us; and hereby they overthrow the prayers of all believers, which the ancient church continually pressed the Pelagians withal. Without a sense of these things, I must profess I understand not how any man can pray. And this knowledge, as was said, we have not of ourselves. Nature is blind, and cannot see them; it is proud, and will not own them; stupid, and is senseless of them. It is the work of the Spirit of God alone to give us a due conviction of, a spiritual insight into, and a sense of the concernment of, these things. This I have elsewhere so fully proved as not here again to insist on it.

It is not easy to conjecture how men pray, or what they pray about, who know not *the plague of their own hearts;* yea, this ignorance, want of light into, or conviction of, the depravation of their nature, and the remainders thereof even in those that are renewed, with the fruits, consequents, and effects thereof, are the principal cause of men's barrenness in this duty, so that they can seldom go beyond what is prescribed unto them. And they can thence also satisfy themselves with a set or frame of well-composed words; wherein they might easily discern that their own condition and concernment are not at all expressed if they were acquainted with them. I do not fix measures unto other men, nor give bounds unto their understandings; only I shall take leave to profess, for my own part, that I cannot conceive or apprehend how any man doth or can know what to pray for as he ought, in the whole compass and course of that duty, who hath no spiritual illumination, enabling him to discern in some measure the corruption of his nature and the internal evils of his heart. If men judge the faculties of their souls to be undepraved, their minds free from vanity, their hearts from guile and deceit, their wills from perverseness and carnality, I wonder not on what grounds they despise the prayers of others, but should do so to find real humiliation and fervency in their own.

Hereunto I may add the irregularity and disorder of our affections. These, I confess, are discernible in the light of nature, and the rectifying of them, or an attempt for it, was the principal end of the old philosophy; but the chief respect that on this principle it had unto them is as they disquiet the mind, or break forth into outward expressions, whereby men are defiled, or dishonoured, or distressed. So far natural light will go; and thereby, in the working of their consciences, as far as I know, men may be *put to pray* about them: but

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the chief depravation of the affections lies in their aversation unto things spiritual and heavenly.

They are, indeed, sometimes ready of themselves to like things spiritual under false notions of them, and divine worship under superstitious ornaments and meretricious dresses; in which respect they are the spring and life of all that devotion which is in the church of Rome: but take heavenly and spiritual things in themselves, with respect unto their proper ends, and there is in all our affections, as corrupted, a dislike of them and aversation unto them, which variously act themselves, and influence our souls unto vanities and disorders in all holy duties. And no man knows what it is to pray who is not exercised in supplications for mortifying, changing, and renewing of these affections as spiritually irregular; and yet is it the Spirit of God alone which discovereth these things unto us, and gives us a sense of our concernment in them. I say, the spiritual irregularity of our affections, and their aversation from spiritual things, is discernible in no light but that of supernatural illumination; for if without that spiritual things themselves cannot be discerned, as the apostle assures us they cannot, 1 Cor. ii. 14, it is impossible that the disorder of our affections with respect unto them should be so. If we know not an object in the true nature of it, we cannot know the actings of our minds towards it. Wherefore, although there be in our affections an innate, universal aversation from spiritual things, seeing by nature we are wholly alienated from the life of God, yet can it not be discerned by us in any light but that which discovers these spiritual things themselves unto us; nor can any man be made sensible of the evil and guilt of that disorder who hath not a love also implanted in his heart unto those things which it finds obstructed thereby. Wherefore, the mortification of these affections, and their renovation with respect unto things spiritual and heavenly, being no small part of the matter of the prayers of believers, as being an especial part of their duty, they have no otherwise an acquaintance with them or sense of them but as they receive them by light and conviction from the Spirit of God; and those who are destitute hereof must needs be strangers unto the life and power of the duty of prayer itself.

As it is with respect unto sin, so it is with respect unto God and Christ, and the covenant, grace, holiness, and privileges. We have no spiritual conceptions about them, no right understanding of them, no insight into them, but what is given us by the Spirit of God; and without an acquaintance with these things, what are our prayers, or what do they signify? Men without them may say on to the world's end without giving any thing of glory unto God, or obtaining of any advantage unto their own souls.

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And this I place as the *first part* of the work of the Spirit of supplication in believers, enabling them to pray according to the mind of God, which of themselves *they know not how to do*, as is afterward in the place of the apostle insisted on. When this is done, when a right apprehension of sin and grace, and of our concernment in them, is fixed on our minds, then have we in some measure the *matter of prayer* always in readiness; which words and expressions will easily follow, though the aid of the Holy Spirit be necessary thereunto also, as we shall afterward declare.

And hence it is that the duty performed with respect unto this part of the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God is of late by some (as was said) vilified and reproached. Formerly their exceptions lay all of them against some expressions or weakness of some persons in conceived prayer, which they liked not; but now scorn is poured out upon the matter of prayer itself, especially the humble and deep confessions of sin, which, on the discoveries before mentioned, are made in the supplications of ministers and others. The things themselves are traduced as absurd, foolish, and irrational, as all spiritual things are unto some sorts of men. Neither do I see how this disagreement is capable of any reconciliation; for they who have no light to discern those respects of sin and grace which we have mentioned cannot but think it uncouth to have them continually made the matter of men's prayers. And those, on the other hand, who have received a light into them and acquaintance with them by the Spirit of God are troubled at nothing more than that they cannot sufficiently[1] abase themselves under a sense of them, nor in any words fully express that impression on their minds which is put on them by the Holy Ghost, nor clothe their desires after grace and mercy with words sufficiently significant and emphatical. And therefore this difference is irreconcilable by any but the Spirit of God himself. Whilst it doth abide, those who have respect only unto what is discernible in the light of nature, or of a natural conscience, in their prayers will keep themselves unto general expressions and outward things, in words prepared unto that purpose by themselves or others, do we what we can to the contrary; for men will not be led beyond their own light, neither is it meet they should. And those who do receive the supplies of the Spirit in this matter will in their prayers be principally conversant about the spiritual, internal concernments of their souls in sin and grace, let others despise

[1] "Omnino oportet nos orationis tempore curiam intrare cœlestem, illam utique curiam, in qua rex regum stellato sedet solio, circumdante innumerabili et ineffabili beatorum spirituum exercitu. . . . . Quanta ergo cum reverentia, quanto timore, quanta illuc humilitate accedere debet, à palude sua procedens et repens ranuncula vilis? Quam tremebundus, quam supplex, quam denique humilis et sollicitus, et toto intentus animo majestati gloriæ, in præsentia angelorum, in concilio justorum et congregatione assistere poterit miser homuncio?"—Bernard. Serm. de quatuor orandi modis.

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them and reproach them whilst they please. And it is in vain much to contend about these things, which are regulated not by arguments but by principles. Men will invincibly adhere unto the capacity of their light. Nothing can put an end to this difference but a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit from above; which, according unto the promise, we wait for.

Secondly, We *know not what to pray for as we ought*, but the Holy Ghost acquaints us with the *grace* and *mercy* which are prepared in the *promises* of God for our relief. That the knowledge hereof is necessary, to enable us to direct our prayers unto God in a due manner, I declared before, and I suppose it will not be denied; for, what do we pray for? what do we take a prospect and design of in our supplications? what is it we desire to be made partakers of? Praying only by saying or repeating so many words of prayer, whose sense and meaning those who make use of them perhaps understand not, as in the Papacy, or so as to rest in the saying or repetition of them without an especial design of obtaining some thing or things which we make known in our supplications, is unworthy the disciples of Christ, indeed of rational creatures. "Deal thus with thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?" as Mal. i. 8. Neither ruler, nor friend, nor neighbour, would accept it at our hands, if we should constantly make solemn addresses unto them without any especial design. We must "pray with our understanding;" that is, understand what we pray for. And these things are no other but what God hath promised; which if we are not regulated by in our supplications, we "ask amiss." It is, therefore, indispensably necessary unto prayer that we should know *what God hath promised*, or that we should have an understanding of the grace and mercy of the promises. God knoweth our wants, what is good for us, what is useful to us, what is necessary to bring us unto the enjoyment of himself, infinitely better than we do ourselves; yea, we know nothing of these things but what he is pleased to teach us. These are the things which he hath "prepared" for us, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. ii. 9; and what he hath so prepared he declareth in the promises of the covenant, for they are the declaration of the grace and good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself. And hence believers may learn what is good for them, and what is wanting unto them in the promises, more clearly and certainly than by any other means whatever. From them, therefore, do we learn what to pray for as we ought. And this is another reason why men are so barren in their supplications, they know not what to pray for, but are forced to betake themselves unto a confused repetition of the same requests, —namely, their ignorance of the promises of God, and the grace exhibited in them. Our inquiry, therefore, is, by what way or means

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we come to an acquaintance with these promises, which all believers have in some measure, some more full and distinct than others, but all in a useful sufficiency. And this, we say, is by the Spirit of God, without whose aid and assistance we can neither understand them nor what is contained in them.

I do confess that some, by frequent reading of the Scripture, by only the help of a *faithful memory*, may be able to express in their prayers the promises of God, without any spiritual acquaintance with the grace of them; whereby they administer unto others, and not unto themselves: but this remembrance of words or expressions belongs not unto the especial work of the Holy Ghost in supplying the hearts and minds of believers with the matter of prayer. But this is that which he doth herein:—he openeth their eyes, he giveth an understanding, he enlighteneth their minds, so that they shall perceive the things that are of God prepared for them, and that are contained in the promises of the gospel; and represents them therein in their beauty, glory, suitableness, and desirableness unto their souls: he maketh them to see Christ in them, and all the fruits of his mediation in them, all the effect of the grace and love of God in them; the excellency of mercy and pardon, of grace and holiness, of a new heart, with principles, dispositions, inclinations, and actings, all as they are proposed in the truth and faithfulness of God. Now, when the mind and heart is continually filled with an understanding and due apprehension of these things, it is always furnished with the matter of prayer and praise unto God; which persons make use of according as they have actual assistance and utterance given unto them. And whereas this Holy Spirit together with the knowledge of them doth also implant a love unto them upon the minds of believers, they are not only hereby directed what to pray for, but are excited and stirred up to seek after the enjoyment of them with ardent affections and earnest endeavours; which is to pray. And although, among those on whose hearts these things are not implanted, some may, as was before observed, make an appearance of it, by expressing in prayer the words of the promises of God retained in their memories, yet for the most part they are not able themselves to pray in any tolerable useful manner, and do either wonder at or despise those that are so enabled.

But it may be said, "That where there is any *defect* herein, it may be easily supplied; for if men are not acquainted with the *promises* of God themselves in the manner before described, and so know not what they ought to pray for, others, who have the understanding of them, may *compose prayers* for their use, according to their apprehensions of the mind of God in them, which they may read, and so have the *matter of prayer* always in a readiness."

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I answer,—1. I do not know that any one hath a command or promise of assistance to make or compose prayers to be said or read by others as their prayers; and therefore I expect no great matter from what any one shall do in that kind. The Spirit of grace and supplication is promised, as I have proved, to *enable us to pray*, not to *enable us to make or compose prayers for others*.

2. It savours of some unacquaintance with the promises of God and the duty of prayer, to imagine that the *matter* of them, so as to suit the various conditions of believers, can be pent up in any one *form* of man's devising. Much of what we are to pray about may be in general and doctrinally comprised in a form of words, as they are in the Lord's Prayer, which gives directions in and a boundary unto our requests; but that the things themselves should be prepared and suited unto the condition and wants of them that are to pray is a fond imagination.

3. There is a vast difference between an *objective proposal* of good things to be prayed for unto the consideration of them that are to pray, which *men* may do, and the implanting an acquaintance with them and love unto them upon the mind and heart, which is the work of the *Holy Ghost*.

4. When things are so prepared and cast into a *form of prayer*, those by whom such forms are used do no more understand them than if they had never been cast into any such form, unless the Spirit of God give them an understanding of them, which the form itself is no sanctified means unto; and where that is done, there is no need of it.

5. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to give unto believers such a *comprehension* of promised grace and mercy as that they may constantly apply their minds unto that or those things in an especial manner which are suited unto their present daily wants and occasions, with the frame and dispositions of their souls and spirit. This is that which gives spiritual beauty and order unto the duty of prayer,—namely, the suiting of wants and supplies, of a thankful disposition and praises, of love and admiration, unto the excellencies of God in Christ, all by the wisdom of the Holy Ghost. But when a person is made to pray by his directory for things, though good in themselves, yet not suited unto his present state, frame, inclination, wants, and desires, there is a spiritual confusion and disorder, and nothing else.

Again; what we have spoken concerning the *promises* must also be applied unto all the *precepts* or commands of God. These in like manner are the *matter of our prayers*, both as to confession and supplication; and without a right understanding of them, we can perform no part of this duty as we ought. This is evident in their

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apprehension who, repeating the words of the decalogue, do subjoin their acknowledgments of a want of mercy, with respect unto the transgression of them I suppose, and their desires to have their hearts inclined to keep the law. But the law with all the commands of God are spiritual and inward, with whose true sense and importance, in their extent and latitude, we cannot have a useful acquaintance but by the enlightening, instructing efficacy of the grace of the Spirit. And where this is, the mind is greatly supplied with the true matter of prayer; for when the soul hath learned the spirituality and holiness of the law, its extent unto the inward frame and disposition of our hearts, as well as unto outward actions, and its requiring absolute holiness, rectitude, and conformity unto God, at all times and in all things, then doth it see and learn its own discrepancy from it and coming short of it, even then when as to outward acts and duties it is unblamable. And hence do proceed those confessions of sin, in the best and most holy believers, which they who understand not these things do deride and scorn. By this means, therefore, doth the Holy Spirit help us to pray, by supplying us with the due and proper matter of supplications, even by acquainting us and affecting our hearts with the spirituality of the command, and our coming short thereof in our dispositions and frequent inordinate actings of our minds and affections. He who is instructed herein will on all occasions be prepared with a fulness of matter for confession and humiliation, as also with a sense of that grace and mercy which we stand in need of with respect unto the obedience required of us.

Thirdly, He alone guides and directs believers to pray or ask for any thing *in order unto right and proper ends:* for there is nothing so excellent in itself, so useful unto us, so acceptable unto God, as the matter of prayer; but it may be vitiated, corrupted, and prayer itself be rendered vain, by an application of it unto false or mistaken ends. And that in this case we are relieved by the Holy Ghost, is plain in the text under consideration; for helping our infirmities, and teaching us what to pray for as we ought, he "maketh intercession for us according to God,"—that is, his mind or his will, Rom. viii. 27. This is well explained by Origen on the place: "Velut si magister suscipiens ad rudimenta discipulum, et ignorantem penitus literas, ut eum docere possit et instituere, necesse habet inclinare se ad discipuli rudimenta, et ipse prius dicere nomen literæ, ut respondendo discipulus discat, et sit quodammodo magister incipienti discipulo similis, ea loquens et ea meditans, quæ incipiens loqui debeat ac meditari; ita et Sanctus Spiritus, ubi oppugnationibus carnis perturbari nostrum spiritum viderit, et nescientem quid orare debeat secundum quod oportet, ipse velut magister orationem præmittit,

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quam noster spiritus (si tamen discipulus esse Sancti Spiritus desiderat) prosequatur, ipse gemitus offert quibus noster spiritus discat ingemiscere, ut repropitiet sibi Deum." To the same purpose speaks Damascen, lib. iv. chap. 3; and Austin in sundry places, collected by Beda, in his comment on this He doth it in us and by us, or enableth us so to do; for the Spirit himself *without us* hath no office to be performed immediately towards God, nor any nature inferior unto the divine wherein he might intercede. The whole of any such work with respect unto us is incumbent on Christ; he alone in his own person performeth what is to be done with God for us. What the Spirit doth, he doth in and by us. He therefore directs and enableth us to make supplications "according to the mind of God." And herein God is said to "know the mind of the Spirit;" that is, his end and design in the matter of his requests. This God knows; that is, approves of and accepts. So it is the Spirit of God who directs us as to the design and end of our prayers, that they may find acceptance with God.

But yet there may be, and I believe there is, more in that expression, "God knoweth the mind of the Spirit;" for he worketh such high, holy, spiritual desires and designs in the minds of believers in their supplications as God alone knoweth and understandeth in their full extent and latitude. That of ourselves we are apt to fail and mistake hath been declared from James iv. 3.

I shall not here insist on particulars, but only mention two general ends of prayer which the Holy Spirit keeps the minds of believers unto in all their requests, where he hath furnished them with the *matter* of them according to the mind of God; for he doth not only make *intercession in them*, according unto the mind of God, with respect unto the matter of their requests, but also with respect unto the end which they aim at, that it may be accepted with him. He guides them, therefore, to design,—

1. That all the *success of their petitions* and prayers may have an immediate tendency unto the glory of God. It is he alone who enables them to subordinate all their desires unto God's glory. Without his especial aid and assistance we should aim *at self only and ultimately* in all we do. Our own profit, ease, satisfaction, mercies, peace, and deliverance, would be the end whereunto we should direct all our supplications; whereby they would be all vitiated and become abominable.

2. He keeps them unto this also, that the issue of their supplications may be the *improvement of holiness* in them, and thereby their conformity unto God, with their nearer access unto him. Where these ends are not, the matter of prayer may be good and according to the word of God, and yet our prayers an abomination. We may

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pray for mercy and grace, and the best promised fruits of the love of God, and yet for want of these ends find no acceptance in our supplications. To keep us unto them is his work, because it consists in casting out all self ends and aims, bringing all natural desires unto a subordination unto God, which he worketh in us if he worketh in us any thing at all.

And this is the first part of the work of the Spirit towards believers as a Spirit of grace and supplication,—he furnisheth and filleth their minds with the matter of prayer, teaching them thereby what to pray for as they ought; and where this is not wrought in some measure and degree, there is no praying according to the mind of God.

CHAPTER VI.

The due manner of prayer, wherein it doth consist.

THE Holy Spirit having given the *mind* a due apprehension of the *things we ought to pray for*, or furnished it with the matter of prayer, he moreover works a due *sense and valuation* of them, with desires after them, upon the will and affections; wherein the *due manner of it* doth consist. These things are separable. The mind may have light to discern the things that are to be prayed for, and yet the will and affections be dead unto them or unconcerned in them; and there may be a gift of prayer founded hereon, in whose exercise the soul doth not spiritually act towards God, for light is the matter of all common gifts. And by virtue of a perishing illumination, a man may attain a gift in prayer which may be of use unto the edification of others; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given unto every man to profit withal." In the meantime, it is with him that so prayeth not much otherwise than it was with him of old who prayed in an unknown tongue: "his spirit prayeth, but his understanding is unfruitful." He prayeth by virtue of the light and gift that he hath received, but his own soul is not benefited nor improved thereby. Only sometimes God makes use of men's own gifts to convey grace into their own souls; but prayer, properly so called, is the obediential acting of the whole soul towards God.

Wherefore, first, where the Holy Spirit completes his work in us as a Spirit of grace and supplication, he worketh on the will and affections to act obediently towards God in and about the matter of our prayers. Thus when he is poured out as a Spirit of supplication, he fills them unto whom he is communicated with mourning and godly sorrow, to be exercised in their prayers as the matter doth require, Zech. xii. 10. He doth not only enable them to pray, but worketh affections in them suitable unto what they pray about. And in this

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work of the Spirit lies the fountain of that inexpressible fervency and delight, of those enlarged labourings of mind and desires, which are in the prayers of believers, especially when they are under the power of more than ordinary influences from him: for these things proceed from the work of the Spirit on their wills and affections, stirring them up and carrying them forth unto God, in and by the matter of their prayers, in such a manner as no vehement working of natural affections can reach unto; and therefore is the Spirit said to "make intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26, 27, ὑπερεντυγχάνει. As he had before expressed his work in general by συναντιλαμβάνεται, which intendeth a help by working, carrying us on in our undertaking in this duty beyond our own strength (for he helpeth us on under our infirmities or weaknesses), so his especial acting is here declared by ὑπερεντυγχάνει, that is, an additional interposition, like that of an advocate for his client, pleading that in his case which he of himself is not able to do. Once this word is used in the service of a contrary design. Speaking of the prayer of Elijah, the apostle says, Ὡς ἐντυγχάνει τῷ Θεῷ κατὰ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ·—"How he maketh intercession to God against Israel," Rom. xi. 2; as בָּשַׂר, which is constantly used in the Old Testament for "to declare good tidings, tidings of peace," is once applied in a contrary signification unto tidings of evil and destruction, 1 Sam. iv. 17. The man that brought the news of the destruction of the army of the Israelites and the taking of the ark by the Philistines is called הַמְבַשֵּׂר. But the proper use of this word is to intercede for grace and favour; and this he doth στεναγμοῖς ἀλαλήτοις. We ourselves are said στενάζειν, to "groan," Rom. viii. 23; that is, humbly, mournfully, and earnestly to desire. And here the Spirit is said to "intercede for us with groanings;" which can be nothing but his working in us and acting by us that frame of heart and those fervent, labouring desires, which are so expressed, and these with such depth of intension and labouring of mind as cannot be uttered. And this he doth by the work now mentioned.

Secondly, Having truly affected the whole soul, enlightened the mind in the perception of the truth, beauty, and excellency of spiritual things, engaged the will in the choice of them and prevalent love unto them, excited the affections to delight in them and unto desires after them, there is in the actual discharge of this duty of prayer, wrought in the soul by the power and efficacy of his grace, such an inward labouring of heart and spirit, such a holy, supernatural desire and endeavour after a union with the things prayed for in the enjoyment of them, as no words can utter or expressly declare,—that is, fully and completely,—which is the sense of the place.

To avoid the force of this testimony, some (one at least) would

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have this intercession of the Spirit to be *the intercession of the Spirit in Christ for us now at the right hand of God;* so that no work of the Spirit itself *in believers* is intended. Such irrational evasions will men sometimes make use of to escape the convincing power of light and truth; for this is such a description of the intercession of Christ at the right hand of God as will scarcely be reconciled unto the analogy of faith. That it is not an *humble, oral* supplication, but a blessed representation of his oblation, whereby the efficacy of it is continued and applied unto all the particular occasions of the church or believers, I have elsewhere declared, and it is the common faith of Christians. But here it should be *reported as the labouring of the Spirit in him with unutterable groans;* the highest expression of an humble, burdened, solicitous endeavour. Nothing is more unsuited unto the present glorious condition of the Mediator. It is true that "in the days of his flesh" he prayed "with strong crying and tears," in an humble deprecation of evil, Heb. v. 7; but an humble prostration and praying with unutterable groans is altogether inconsistent with his present state of glory, his fulness of power, and right to dispense all the grace and mercy of the kingdom of God. Besides, this exposition is as adverse to the context as any thing that could be invented. Rom. viii. 15, it is said that we "receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" which Spirit "God sends forth into our hearts," Gal. iv. 6. And the blessed work of this Spirit in us is farther described, Rom. viii. 16, 17. And thereon, verse 23, having received "the first-fruits of this Spirit," we are said to "groan within ourselves;" to which it is added, that of ourselves not knowing what we ought to pray for, *αὐτὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα*, "that very Spirit," so given unto us, so received by us, so working in us, "maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Wherefore, without offering violence unto the context, there is no place for the introduction of the intercession of Christ in heaven, especially under such an expression as is contrary to the nature of it. It is mentioned afterward by the apostle, in its proper place, as a consequent and fruit of his death and resurrection, verse 34. And there he is said simply *ἐντυγχάνειν* but the Spirit here is said *ὑπερεντυγχάνειν*, which implies an additional supply unto what is in ourselves.

Yet, to give countenance unto this uncouth exposition, a force is put upon the beginning of both the verses 26, 27: for whereas *ἀσθένεια* doth constantly in the Scripture denote any kind of infirmity or weakness, spiritual or corporeal, it is said here to be taken in the latter sense, for diseases with troubles and dangers, which latter it nowhere signifies; for so the meaning should be, that in such conditions we know not what to pray for, whether wealth, or health, or peace, or the like, but Christ intercedes for us. And this must be the sense

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of *συναντιλαμβάνεται ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν*, which yet in the text doth plainly denote a help and assistance given unto our weaknesses, that is, unto us who are weak, in the discharge of the duty of prayer, as both the words themselves and the ensuing reasons of them do evince. Wherefore, neither the grammatical sense of the words, nor the context, nor the analogy of faith, will admit of this new and uncouth exposition.

In like manner, if it be inquired why it is said "that he who searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,"—which plainly refers to some great and secret work of the Spirit in the heart of man,—if the intercession of Christ be intended, nothing is offered but this paraphrase, "And then God, that, by being a searcher of hearts, knoweth our wants exactly, understands also the desire and intention of the Spirit of Christ." But these things are *ἀπροσδιόνυσα*, and have no dependence the one on the other; nor was there any need of the mentioning the searching of our hearts, to introduce the approbation of the intercession of Christ. But to return.

That is wrought in the hearts of believers in their duty which is pervious to none but Him that searcheth the heart. This frame in all our supplications we ought to aim at, especially in time of distress, troubles, and temptations, such as was the season here especially intended, when commonly we are most sensible of our own infirmities: and wherein we come short hereof in some measure, it is from our unbelief, or carelessness and negligence; which God abhors. I do acknowledge that there may be, that there will be, more earnestness and intension of mind, and of our natural spirit therein, in this duty, at one time than another, according as outward occasions or other motives do excite them or stir them up. So our Saviour in his agony prayed more earnestly than usual; not with a higher exercise of grace, which always acted itself in him in perfection, but with a greater vehemency in the working of his natural faculties. So it may be with us at especial seasons; but yet we are always to endeavour after the same aids of the Spirit, the same actings of grace in every particular duty of this kind.

Thirdly, The Holy Spirit gives the soul of a believer a *delight in God* as the *object of prayer*. I shall not insist on his exciting, moving, and acting all other graces that are required in the exercise of this duty, as faith, love, reverence, fear, trust, submission, waiting, hope, and the like. I have proved elsewhere that the exercise of them all, in all duties, and of all other graces in like manner, is from him, and shall not therefore here again confirm the same truth. But this delight in God as the object of prayer hath a peculiar consideration in this matter; for without it ordinarily the duty is not accepted with God, and is a barren, burdensome task unto

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them by whom it is performed. Now, this delight in God as the *object of prayer* is, for the substance of it, included in that description of prayer given us by the apostle,—namely, that it is crying "Abba, Father." Herein a filial, holy delight in God is included, such as children have in their parents in their most affectionate addresses unto them, as hath been declared. And we are to inquire wherein this delight in God as the object of prayer doth consist, or what is required thereunto. And there is in it,—

1. A sight or prospect of God as on a *throne of grace*. A prospect, I say, not by carnal imagination, but spiritual illumination. "By faith we see him who is invisible," Heb. xi. 27; for it is the "evidence of things not seen" making its proper object evident and present unto them that do believe. Such a sight of God on a throne of grace is necessary unto this delight. Under this consideration he is the proper object of all our addresses unto him in our supplications: chap. iv. 16, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The duty of prayer is described by the subject-matter of it, namely, "mercy" and "grace," and by the only object of it, "God on a throne of grace."

And this "throne of grace" is farther represented unto us by the place where it is erected or set up, and that is in the holiest or most holy place; for in our coming unto God as on that throne, we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," Heb. x. 19. And hereby the apostle shows, that in the expression he has respect or alludes unto the mercy-seat upon the ark, covered with the cherubims, which had a representation of a throne; and because of God's especial manifestation of himself thereon, it was called his throne; and it was a representation of Jesus Christ, as I have showed elsewhere.

God, therefore, on a throne of grace is God as in a readiness through Jesus Christ to dispense grace and mercy to suppliant sinners. When God comes to execute judgment, his throne is otherwise represented. See Dan. vii. 9, 10. And when sinners take a view in their minds of God as he is in himself, and as he will be unto all out of Christ, it ingenerates nothing but dread and terror in them, with foolish contrivances to avoid him or his displeasure, Isa. xxxiii. 14; Mic. vi. 6, 7; Rev. vi. 16, 17. All these places and others testify that when sinners do engage into serious thoughts and conceptions of the nature of God, and what entertainment they shall meet with from him, all their apprehensions issue in dread and terror. This is not a frame wherein they can cry, "Abba, Father." If they are delivered from this fear and bondage, it is by that which is worse, namely, carnal boldness and presumption, whose rise lieth

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in the highest contempt of God and his holiness. When men give up themselves to the customary performance of this duty, or rather "saying of their prayers,' I know not out of what conviction that so they must do, without a due consideration of God and the regard that he hath unto them, they do but provoke him to his face in taking his name in vain; nor, however they satisfy themselves in what they do, have they any delight in God in their approaches unto him.

Wherefore, there is required hereunto a prospect of God, by faith, as on a "throne of grace," as exalted in Christ to show mercy unto sinners. So is he represented, Isa. xxx. 18, "Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy." Without this we cannot draw nigh to him, or call upon him with delight, as becometh children, crying, "Abba, Father." And by whom is this discovery made unto us? Is this a fruit of our own fancy and imagination? So it may be with some, to their ruin. But it is the work of the Spirit, who alone, in and through Christ, revealeth God unto us, and enableth us to discern him in a due manner. Hence our apostle prays for the Ephesians "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints," chap. i. 17, 18. All the acquaintance which we have with God, in a way of grace, is from the revelation made in us by his Spirit. See Col. ii. 1, 2. By him doth God say unto us that "fury is not in him," and that if we lay hold on his arm, that we may have peace, we shall have peace, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5.

2. Unto this *delight* is required a sense of God's *relation unto us as a Father*. By that name, and under that consideration, hath the Lord Christ taught us to address ourselves unto him in all our supplications. And although we may use other titles and appellations in our speaking to him, even such as he hath given himself in the Scripture, or those which are analogous thereunto, yet this consideration principally influenceth our souls and minds, that God is not ashamed to be called our Father, that "the Lord Almighty hath said that he will be a Father unto us, and that we shall be his sons and daughters," 2 Cor. vi. 18. Wherefore, as a Father is he the ultimate object of all evangelical worship, of all our prayers. So is it expressed in that holy and divine description of it given by the apostle, Eph. ii. 18, "Through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." No tongue can express, no mind can reach, the heavenly placidness and soul-satisfying delight which are intimated in these words. To come to God as a Father, through Christ, by the help

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and assistance of the Holy Spirit, revealing him as a Father unto us, and enabling us to go to him as a Father, how full of sweetness and satisfaction is it! Without a due apprehension of God in this relation no man can pray as he ought. And hereof we have no sense, herewith we have no acquaintance, but by the Holy Ghost; for we do not consider God in a general manner, as he may be said to be a Father unto the whole creation, but in an especial, distinguishing relation,—as he makes us his children by adoption. And as it is "the Spirit that beareth witness with our spirit that we are thus the children of God," Rom. viii. 16, giving us the highest and utmost assurance of our estate of sonship in this world; so being the Spirit of adoption, it is by him alone that we have any acquaintance with our interest in that privilege.

Some may apprehend that these things belong but little, and that very remotely, unto the duty of prayer, and the assistance we receive by the Spirit therein; but the truth is, those who are so minded, on consideration, know neither what it is to pray nor what doth belong thereunto. There is nothing more essential unto this duty than that, in the performance of it, we address ourselves unto God under the notion of a Father; that is, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in him our Father also. Without this we cannot have that holy delight in this duty which is required in us, and the want whereof ordinarily ruins our design in it. And this we can have no spiritual, satisfactory sense of but what we receive by and from the Spirit of God.

3. There belongeth thereunto that boldness which we have in our access into the holy place, or unto the throne of grace: "Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 19, 22. Where there is on men a "spirit of fear unto bondage," they can never have any delight in their approaches unto God. And this is removed by the Spirit of grace and supplication: Rom. viii. 15, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." These things are opposed, and the one is only removed and taken away by the other. And where the "spirit of bondage unto fear" abides, there we cannot cry, "Abba, Father," or pray in a due manner; but "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. And this, as we render the word, consists in two things:—(1.) *In orandi libertate;* (2.) *In exauditionis fiducia.*

(1.) There is in it an *enlarged liberty* and freedom of speech in prayer unto God; so the word signifies. Παρρησία is as much as πανρησία, a freedom to speak all that is to be spoken, a confidence that countenanceth men in the freedom of speech, according to the

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exigency of their state, condition, and cause. So the word is commonly used, Eph. vi. 19. Where there is servile fear and dread, the heart is straitened, bound up, knows not what it may, what it may not utter, and is pained about the issue of all it thinks or speaks; or it cannot pray at all beyond what is prescribed unto it to say, as it were, whether it will or no. But where this Spirit of liberty and boldness is, the heart is enlarged with a true, genuine openness and readiness to express all its concerns unto God as a child unto its father. I do not say that those who have this aid of the Spirit have always this liberty in exercise, or equally so. The exercise of it may be variously impeded, by temptations, spiritual indispositions, desertions, and by our own negligence in stirring up the grace of God. But believers have it always in the root and principle, even all that have received the Spirit of adoption, and are ordinarily assisted in the use of it. Hereby are they enabled to comply with the blessed advice of the apostle, Phil. iv. 6, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." The whole of our concerns in this world is to be committed unto God in prayer, so that we should not retain any dividing cares in our own minds about them. And herein the apostle would have us to use a holy freedom and boldness in speaking unto God on all occasions, as one who concerns himself in them; to hide nothing from God,—which we do what lieth in us when we present it not unto him in our prayers,—but use a full, plain-hearted, open liberty with him: "In every thing let your requests be made known unto God." He is ready to hear all that you have to offer unto him or plead before him. And in so doing, the "peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ," verse 7; which is ordinarily the condition of those who are found in diligent obedience unto this command.

(2.) There is also in it a *confidence of acceptance*, or being heard in prayer; that is, that God is well pleased with their duties, accepting both them and their persons in Jesus Christ. Without this we can have no delight in prayer, or in God as the object of it; which vitiates the whole duty. When Adam thought there was no acceptance with God for him, he had no confidence of access unto him, but, as the first effect of folly that ensued on the entrance of sin, went to hide himself. And all those who have no ground of spiritual confidence for acceptance with Christ do in their prayers but endeavour to hide themselves from God by the duty which they perform. They cast a mist about them, to obscure themselves from the sight of their own convictions, wherein alone they suppose that God sees them also. But in such a frame there is neither delight, nor enlargement, nor liberty, nor indeed prayer itself.

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Now, this confidence or boldness, which is given unto believers in their prayers by the Holy Ghost, respects not the answer of every particular request, especially in their own understanding of it, but it consists in a holy persuasion that God is well pleased with their duties, accepts their persons, and delights in their approaches unto his throne. Such persons are not terrified with apprehensions that God will say unto them, "What have ye to do to take my name into your mouths, or to what purpose are the multitude of your supplications? When ye make many prayers, I will not hear." "Will he," saith Job, "plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me," chap. xxiii. 6. Yea, they are assured that the more they are with God, the more constantly they abide with him, the better is their acceptance; for as they are commanded to pray always and not to faint, so they have a sufficient warranty from the encouragement and call of Christ to be frequent in their spiritual addresses to him. So he speaks to his church, Cant. ii. 14, "O my dove, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." And herein also is comprised a due apprehension of the goodness and power of God, whereby he is, in all conditions, ready to receive them and able to relieve them. The voice of sinners by nature, let presumption and superstition pretend what they please to the contrary, is, that God is austere, and not capable of condescension or compassion. And the proper acting of unbelief lies in limiting the Most Holy, saying, "Can God do this or that thing, which the supplies of our necessities do call for? are they possible with God?" So long as either of these worketh in us with any kind of prevalency, it is impossible we should have any delight in calling upon God. But we are freed from them by the Holy Ghost, in the representation he makes of the engaged goodness and power of God in the promises of the covenant; which gives us boldness in his presence.

Fourthly, It is the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer to keep the souls of believers intent upon Jesus Christ, as the only way and means of acceptance with God. This is the fundamental direction for prayer now under the gospel. We are now to ask in his name; which was not done expressly under the Old Testament. Through him we act faith on God in all our supplications; by him we have an access unto the Father. We enter into the holiest through the new and living way that he hath consecrated for us. The various respect which faith hath unto Jesus Christ as mediator in all our prayers is a matter worthy a particular inquiry, but is not of our present consideration, wherein we declare the work of the Spirit alone; and this is a part of it, that he keeps our souls intent upon Christ, according unto what is required of us, as he is the way of our

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approach unto God, the means of our admittance, and the cause of our acceptance with him. And where faith is not actually exercised unto this purpose, all prayer is vain and unprofitable. And whether our duty herein be answered with a few words, wherein his name is expressed with little spiritual regard unto him, is worth our inquiry.

To enable us hereunto is the work of the Holy Ghost. He it is that glorifies Jesus Christ in the hearts of believers, John xvi. 14; and this he doth when he enableth them to act faith on him in a due manner. So speaks the apostle expressly, Eph. ii. 18, "Through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." It is through Jesus alone that we have our access unto God, and that by faith in him. So we have our access unto him for our persons in justification: Rom. v. 2, "By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." And by him we have our actual access unto him in our supplications when we draw nigh to the throne of grace; but this is by the Spirit. It is he who enables us hereunto, by keeping our minds spiritually intent on him in all our addresses unto God. This is a genuine effect of the Spirit as he is the "Spirit of the Son;" under which consideration in an especial manner he is bestowed on us to enable us to pray, Gal. iv. 6. And hereof believers have a refreshing experience in themselves; nor doth any thing leave a better savour or relish on their souls than when they have had their hearts and minds kept close, in the exercise of faith, on Christ the mediator in their prayers.

I might yet insist on more instances in the declaration of the work of the Holy Ghost in believers, as he is a Spirit of grace and supplication; but my design is not to declare what may be spoken, but to speak what ought not to be omitted. Many other things, therefore, might be added, but these will suffice to give an express understanding of this work unto them who have any spiritual experience of it, and those who have not will not be satisfied with volumes to the same purpose.

Yet something may be here added to free our passage from any just exceptions; for, it may be, some will think that these things are not pertinent unto our present purpose, which is to discover the nature of the duty of prayer, and the assistance which we receive by the Spirit of God therein. "Now, this is only in the words that we use unto God in our prayers, and not in that spiritual delight and confidence which have been spoken unto, which, with other graces, if they may be so esteemed, are of another consideration." *Ans.* 1. It may be that some think so; and also, it may be, and is very likely, that some who will be talking about these things are utterly ignorant what it is to pray in the Spirit, and the whole nature of this duty. Not knowing, therefore, the thing, they hate the very name of it; as

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indeed it cannot but be uncouth unto all who are no way interested in the grace and privilege intended by it. The objections of such persons are but as the strokes of blind men; whatever strength and violence be in them, they always miss the mark. Such are the fierce arguings of the most against this duty; they are full of fury and violence, but never touch the matter intended. 2. My design is so to discover the nature of praying in the Spirit in general as that therewith I may declare what is a furtherance thereunto and what is a hinderance thereof; for if there be any such ways of praying, which men use or oblige themselves unto, which do not comply with, or are not suited to promote, or are unconcerned in, or do not express, those workings of the Holy Ghost which are so directly assigned unto him in the prayers of believers, they are all nothing but means of quenching the Spirit, of disappointing the work of his grace, and rendering the prayers themselves so used, and as such, unacceptable with God. And apparent it is, at least, that most of the ways and modes of prayer used in the Papacy are inconsistent with, and exclusive of, the whole work of the Spirit of supplication.

CHAPTER VII.

The nature of prayer in general, with respect unto forms of prayer and vocal prayer—Eph. vi. 18 opened and vindicated.

THE duty I am endeavouring to express is that enjoined in Eph. vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Some have made bold to advance a fond imagination (as what will not enmity unto the holy ways of God put men upon?) that "praying in the Spirit" intends only praying by virtue of an extraordinary and miraculous gift; but the use of it is here enjoined unto all believers, none excepted, men and women, who yet, I suppose, had not all and every one of them that extraordinary, miraculous gift which they fancy to be intended in that expression. And the performance of this duty is enjoined them, in the manner prescribed, ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ,—"always," say we, "in every season;" that is, such just and due seasons of prayer as duty and our occasions call for. But the apostle expressly confines the exercise of extraordinary gifts unto some certain seasons, when, under some circumstances, they may be needful or useful unto edification, 1 Cor. xiv. There is, therefore, "a praying in the Spirit," which is the constant duty of all believers; and it is a great reproach unto the profession of Christianity where that name itself is a matter of contempt. If

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there be any thing in it that is "foolish, conceited, fanatical," the holy apostle must answer for it, yea, He by whom he was inspired. But if this be the expression of God himself of that duty which he requireth of us, I would not willingly be among the number of them by whom it is derided, let their pretences be what they please. Besides, in the text, all believers are said thus "to pray in the Spirit at all seasons," διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως, and ἐν πάσῃ προσευχῇ καὶ δεήσει, "with all prayer and supplication;" that is, with all manner of prayer, according as our own occasions and necessities do require. A man, certainly, by virtue of this rule, can scarce judge himself obliged to confine his performance of this duty unto a prescript form of words: for a variety in our prayers, commensurate unto the various occasions of ourselves and of the church of God, being here enjoined us, how we can comply therewith in the constant use of any one form I know not; those who do are left unto their liberty. And this we are obliged unto, εἰς αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἀγρυπνοῦντες, "diligently watching unto this very end," that our prayers may be suited unto our occasions. He who can divide this text, or cut it out into a garment to clothe set forms of prayer with, will discover an admirable dexterity in the using and disposal of a text of Scripture.

But yet neither do I conclude from hence that all such forms are unlawful; only, that another way of praying is here enjoined us is, I suppose, unquestionable unto all impartial searchers after truth; and, doubtless, they are not to be blamed who endeavour a compliance therewith. And if persons are able, in the daily, constant reading of any book whatever, merely of a human composition, to rise up in answer to this duty of "praying always with all manner of prayer and supplication in the Spirit," or the exercise of the aid and assistance received from him, and his holy acting of them as a Spirit of grace and supplication, endeavouring, labouring, and watching thereunto, I shall say no more but that they have attained what I cannot understand.

The sole inquiry remaining is, how they are enabled to pray in whose minds the Holy Ghost doth thus work as a Spirit of grace and supplication. And I do say, in answer thereunto, that those who are thus affected by him do never want a gracious ability of making their addresses unto God in *vocal prayer*, so far as is needful unto them in their circumstances, callings, states, and conditions. And this is that which is called the *gift of prayer*. I speak of ordinary cases; for there may be such interpositions of temptations and desertions as that the soul, being overwhelmed with them, may for the present be able only to "mourn as a dove," or to "chatter as a crane," —that is, not to express the sense of their minds clearly and distinctly, but only as it were to mourn and groan before the Lord in broken-

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ness of spirit and expressions. But this also is sufficient for their acceptance in that condition; and hereof there are few believers but at one time or other they have more or less experience. And as for those whose devotion dischargeth itself in a formal course of the same words, as it must needs be in the Papacy, wherein for the most part they understand not the signification of the words which they make use of, they are strangers unto the true nature of prayer, at least unto the work of the Spirit therein. And such supplications as are not variously influenced by the variety of the spiritual conditions of them that make them, according to the variety of our spiritual exercises, are like one constant tone or noise, which hath no harmony nor music in it.

I say, therefore,—1. That the things insisted on are in some *degree* and *measure* necessary unto all acceptable prayer. The Scripture assigns them thereunto, and believers find them so by their own experience. For we discourse not about prayer as it is the working of nature in its straits and difficulties towards the God of nature, expressing thereby its dependence on him, with an acknowledgment of his power, in which sense all flesh, in one way or other, under one notion or other, come to God; nor yet upon those cries which legal convictions will wrest from them that fall under their power: but we treat only of prayer as it is required of believers under the gospel, as they have an "access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father." And, 2. That those in whom this work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in any degree do not, in ordinary cases, want an ability to express themselves in this duty, so far as is needful for them. It is acknowledged that an ability herein will be greatly increased and improved by exercise, and that not only because the exercise of all moral faculties is the genuine way of their strengthening and improvement, but principally because it is instituted, appointed, and commanded of God unto that end. God hath designed the exercise of grace for the means of its growth, and giveth his blessing in answer to his institution. But the nature of the thing itself requires a performance of the duty suitably unto the condition of him that is called unto it; and if men grow not up unto farther degrees in that ability by exercise in the duty itself, by stirring up the gifts and graces of God in them, it is their sin and folly. And hence it follows, 3. That although *set forms of prayer* may be *lawful* unto some, as is pretended, yet are they *necessary* unto none, that is, unto no *true believers*, as unto acceptable, evangelical prayer; but whoever is made partaker of the work of the Spirit of God herein, which he doth infallibly effect in every one who through him is enabled to cry, "Abba, Father," as every child of God is, he will be able to pray according to the mind and will of God, if he neglect not the

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aid and assistance offered unto him for that purpose. Wherefore, to plead for the necessity of forms of prayer unto believers, beyond what may be doctrinal or instructive in them, is a fruit of inclination unto parties, or of ignorance, or of the want of a due attendance unto their own experience.

Of what use *forms of prayer* may be unto those that are not *regenerate*, and have not, therefore, received the Spirit of adoption, belongs not directly unto our disquisition; yet I must say that I understand not clearly the advantage of them unto them, unless a contrivance to relieve them in that condition, without a due endeavour after a deliverance from it, may be so esteemed. For these persons are of two sorts:—(1.) Such as are *openly* under the power of sin, their minds being not effectually influenced by any convictions. These seldom pray, unless it be under dangers, fears, troubles, pains, or other distresses. When they are smitten they will cry, "even to the LORD they will cry," and not else; and their design is to treat about their especial occasions, and the present sense which they have thereof. And how can any man conceive that they should be supplied with forms of prayer expressing their sense, conceptions, and affections, in their particular cases? And how ridiculously they may mistake themselves in reading those prayers which are no way suited unto their condition, is easily supposed. A form to such persons may prove little better than a charm, and their minds be diverted by it from such a performance of duty as the light of nature would direct to. Jonah's mariners in the storm "cried every one unto his god," and called on him also to do so too, chap. i. 5, 6. The substance of their prayer was, that God would "think upon them, that they might not perish." And men in such condition, if not diverted by this pretended relief, which indeed is none, will not want words to express their minds, so far as there is any thing of prayer in what they do; and beyond that, whatever words they are supplied withal, they are of no use or advantage unto them. And it is possible when they are left to work naturally towards God, however unskilled and rude their expressions may be, a deep sense may be left upon their minds, with a reverence of God, and remembrance of their own error, which may be of use to them. But the bounding and directing of the workings of natural religion by a form of words, perhaps little suited unto their occasions and not at all to their affections, tends only to stifle the operation of an awakened conscience, and to give them up unto their former security. (2.) Others there are, such as by education and the power of convictions from the word, by one means or other, are so far brought under a sense of the authority of God and their own duty as *conscientiously*, according unto their light, to attend unto *prayer*, as unto

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other duties also. Now, the case of these men will be more fully determined afterward, when the whole use of the forms of prayer will be spoken unto. For the present I shall only say, that I cannot believe, until farther conviction, that any one whose duty it is to pray is not able to express his requests and petitions in words, so far as he is affected with the matter of them in his mind; and what he doth by any advantage beyond that belongeth not to prayer. Men may, by sloth, and other vicious distempers of mind, especially by a negligence in getting their hearts and consciences duly affected with the matter and object of prayer, keep themselves under a real or supposed disability in this matter; but whereas prayer in this sort of persons is an effect of common illumination and grace, which are also from the Spirit of God, if persons do really and sincerely endeavour a due sense of what they pray for and about, he will not be wanting to help them to express themselves so far as is necessary for them, either privately or in their families. But those who will never enter the water but with flags or bladders under them will scarce ever learn to swim; and it cannot be denied but that the constant and unvaried use of set forms of prayer may become a great occasion of quenching the Spirit, and hindering all progress or growth in gifts or graces. When every one hath done what he can, it is his best, and will be accepted of him, it being according unto what he hath, before that which is none of his.

CHAPTER VIII.

The duty of external prayer by virtue of a spiritual gift explained and vindicated.

WHAT we have hitherto discoursed concerning the work of the Spirit of grace and supplication enabling believers to pray, or to cry "Abba, Father," belongeth principally unto the *internal, spiritual nature of the duty*, and the exercise of grace therein, wherein we have occasionally only diverted unto the consideration of the *interest of words*, and the use of *set forms*, either freely or imposed. And, indeed, what hath been evinced from Scripture testimony herein doth upon the matter render all farther dispute about these things needless; for if the things mentioned be required unto all acceptable prayer, and if they are truly effected in the minds of all believers by the Holy Ghost, it is evident how little use there remains of such pretended aids.

But, moreover, prayer falleth under another consideration, namely, as to its *external performance*, and as the duty is discharged by any

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one in lesser or greater societies, wherein upon his words and expressions do depend their conjunction with him, their communion in the duty, and consequently their edification in the whole. This is the will of God, that in assemblies of his appointment, as churches and families, and occasional meetings of two or three or more in the name of Christ, one should pray in the name of himself and the rest that join with him. Thus are ministers enabled to pray in church-assemblies, as other Christians in occasional meetings of the disciples of Christ in his name, parents in their families, and, in secret, every believer for himself.

There is a *spiritual ability given unto men by the Holy Ghost, whereby they are enabled to express the matter of prayer, as taught and revealed in the manner before described, in words fitted and suited to lead on their own minds and the minds of others unto a holy communion in the duty, to the honour of God and their own edification.* I do not confine the use of this ability unto assemblies; every one may, and usually is to make use of it, according to the measure which he hath received, for himself also; for if a man have not an ability to pray for himself in private and alone, he can have none to pray in public and societies. Wherefore, take prayer as vocal, without which adjunct it is not complete, and this ability belongs to the nature and essence of it. And this also is from the Spirit of God.

This is that which meets with such contradiction and opposition from many, and which hath other things set up in competition with it, yea, to the exclusion of it, even from families and closets also. What they are we shall afterward examine. And judged it is by some not only to be separable from the work of the Spirit of prayer, but no way to belong thereunto. "A fruit," they say, "it is of wit, fancy, memory, elocution, volubility and readiness of speech,"—namely, in them in whom on other accounts they will acknowledge none of these things to be, at least in no considerable degree! Some while since, indeed, they defended themselves against any esteem of this ability, by crying out that "all those who thus prayed by the Spirit, as they call it, did but babble and talk nonsense." But those who have any sobriety and modesty are convinced that the generality of those who do pray according to the ability received do use words of truth and soberness in the exercise thereof. And it is but a sorry relief that any can find in cavilling at some expressions, which, perhaps good and wholesome in themselves, yet suit not their palates; or if they are such as may seem to miss of due order and decency, yet is not their failure to be compared with the extravagances (considering the nature of the duty) of some in supposed quaint and elegant expressions used in this duty. But herein they betake

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themselves unto this countenance, that this ability is the effect of the natural endowments before mentioned only, which they think to be set off by a boldness and confidence but a little beneath an intolerable impudence. Thus, it seems, is it with all who desire to pray as God enables them, that is, according to his mind and will, if any thing in the light of nature, the common voice of mankind, examples of Scripture, express testimonies and commands, are able to declare what is so. I shall, therefore, make way unto the declaration and confirmation of the truth asserted by the ensuing observations.

1. *Every man is to pray or call upon God, according as he is able*, with respect unto his own condition, relations, occasions, and duties. Certainly there is not a man in the world who hath not forfeited all his reason and understanding unto atheism, or utterly buried all their operations under the fury of brutish affections, but he is convinced that it is his duty to pray to the deity he owns, in words of his own, as well as he is able; for this, and none other, is the genuine and natural notion of prayer. This is implanted in the heart of mankind, which they need not be taught nor directed unto. The artificial help of constant forms is an arbitrary invention. And I would hope that there are but few in the world, especially of those who are called Christians, but that at one time or other do so pray. And those who, for the most part, do betake themselves to other reliefs (as unto the reading of prayers, composed unto some good end and purpose, though not absolutely to their occasions, as to the present state of their minds and the things they would pray for, which is absolutely impossible), cannot, as I conceive, but sometimes be conscious to themselves not only of the weakness of what they do, but of their neglect of the duty which they profess to perform. And as for such who, by the prevalency of ignorance, the power of prejudice, and infatuation of superstition, are diverted from the dictates of nature and light of Scripture directions to say a "pater-noster," it may be an "ave," or a "credo," for their prayer, intending it for this or that end, the benefit, it may be, of this or that person, or the obtaining of what is no way mentioned or included in what they utter, there is nothing of prayer in it, but a mere taking the name of God in vain, with the horrible profanation of a holy ordinance.

Persons tied up unto such rules and forms never pray in their lives, but in their occasional ejaculations, which break from them almost by surprisal. And there hath not been any one more effectual means of bringing unholiness, with an ungodly course of conversation, into the Christian world, than this one of teaching men to satisfy themselves in this duty by their saying, reading, or repetition of the words of other men, which, it may be, they understand

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not, and certainly are not in a due manner affected withal; for it is this duty whereby our whole course is principally influenced. And, let men say what they will, our conversation in walking before God, which principally regards the frame and disposition of our hearts, is influenced and regulated by our attendance unto and performance of this duty. He whose prayers are hypocritical is a hypocrite in his whole course; and he who is but negligent in them is equally negligent in all other duties. Now, whereas our whole obedience unto God ought to be our "reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1, how can it be expected that it should be so when the foundation of it is laid in such an irrational supposition, that men should not pray themselves what they are able, but read the forms of others instead thereof, which they do not understand?

2. All the *examples* we have in the Scripture of the prayers of the holy men of old, either under the Old Testament or the New, were all of them the *effects of their own ability* in expressing the gracious conceptions of their minds, wrought in them by the Holy Ghost in the way and manner before described. I call it *their own ability*, in opposition to all outward aids and assistances from others, or an antecedaneous prescription of a form of words unto themselves. Not one instance can be given to the contrary. Sometimes it is said they "spread forth their hands," sometimes that they "lifted up their voices," sometimes that they "fell upon their knees and cried," sometimes that they "poured out their hearts" when overwhelmed; all according unto present occasions and circumstances. The solemn benediction of the priests, instituted of God, like the present forms in the administration of the sacraments, were of another consideration, as shall be showed; and as for those who, by immediate inspiration, gave out and wrote discourses in the form of prayers, which were in part mystical and in part prophetical, we have before given an account concerning them. Some plead, indeed, that the church of the Jews, under the second temple, had sundry forms of prayers in use among them, even at the time when our Saviour was conversant in the temple and their synagogues;—but they pretend and plead what they cannot prove, and I challenge any learned man to give but a tolerable evidence unto the assertion; for what is found to that purpose among the Talmudists is mixed with such ridiculous fables (as the first, suiting the number of their prayers to the number of the bones in the back of a man!) as fully defeats its own evidence.

3. The *commands* which are given us to pray thus according unto our own *abilities* are no more nor less than *all the commands* we have in the Scripture to pray at all. Not one of them hath any regard or respect unto outward forms, aids, or helps of prayer. And

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the manner of prayer itself is so described, limited, and determined, as that no other kind of prayer can be intended: for whereas we are commanded to "pray in the Spirit;" to pray earnestly and fervently, with "the spirit and understanding;" continually, with all manner of "prayer and supplication," to "make our requests known unto God," so as not to take care ourselves about our present concerns; to "pour out our hearts unto God;" to cry, "Abba, Father," by the Spirit, and the like,—I do not understand how these things are suited unto any kind of prayer but only that which is from the ability which men have received for the entire discharge of that duty; for there are evidently intimated in these precepts and directions such various occasional workings of our minds and spirits, such actings of gracious affections, as will not comply with a constant use of a prescribed form of words.

4. When we speak of men's *own ability* in this matter, we do include therein the conscientious, diligent use of all means which God hath appointed for the communication of this ability unto them, or to help them in the due use, exercise, and improvement of it. Such means there are, and such are they to attend unto; as,—

(1.) The diligent *searching of our own hearts*, in their frames, dispositions, inclinations, and actings, that we may be in some measure acquainted with their state and condition towards God. Indeed, the heart of man is absolutely unsearchable unto any but God himself, —that is, as unto a complete and perfect knowledge of it (hence David prays that God would "search and try him," and lead and conduct him by his grace according unto what he found in him, and not leave him wholly to act or be acted according unto his own apprehensions of himself, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24); but yet where we do in sincerity inquire into them, by the help of that spiritual light which we have received, we may discern so much of them as to guide us aright in this and all other duties. If this be neglected, if men live in the dark unto themselves, or satisfy themselves only with an acquaintance with those things which an accusing conscience will not suffer them to be utterly ignorant of, they will never know either how to pray or what to pray for in a due manner. And the want of a due discharge of this duty, which we ought continually to be exercised in, especially on the account of that unspeakable variety of spiritual changes which we are subject unto, is a cause of that barrenness in prayer which is found among the most, as we have observed. He that would abound in all manner of supplication, which is enjoined us, who would have his prayers to be proper, useful, fervent, must be diligent in the search and consideration of his own heart, with all its dispositions and inclinations, and the secret guilt which it doth variously contract.

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(2.) Constant, *diligent reading of the Scriptures* is another duty that this ability greatly depends upon. From the precepts of God therein may we learn our own wants, and from his promises the relief which he hath provided for them; and these things, as hath been showed, supply us with the matter of prayer. Moreover, we thence learn what words and expressions are meet and proper to be used in our accesses unto God. No words nor expressions in themselves or their signification are meet or acceptable herein, but from their analogy unto those in the Scripture, which are of God's own teaching and direction. And where men are much conversant in the word, they will be ready for and furnished with meet expressions of their desires to God always. This is one means whereby they may come so to be; and other helps of the like nature might be insisted on.

5. There is a *use* herein of the *natural abilities* of invention, memory, and elocution. Why should not men use in the service and worship of God what God hath given them that they may be able to serve and worship him? Yea, it setteth off the use and excellency of this spiritual gift, that in the exercise of it we use and act our natural endowments and abilities, as spiritualized by grace; which, in the way set up in competition with it, cannot be done. The more the soul is engaged in its faculties and powers, the more intent it is in and unto the duty.

Nor do I deny but that this gift may be varied in degrees and divers circumstances according unto these abilities, though it have a being of its own distinct from them. Even in extraordinary gifts, as in the receiving and giving out of immediate revelations from God, there was a variety in outward modes and circumstances which followed the diversity and variety of the natural abilities and qualifications of them who were employed in that work. Much more may this difference both be and appear in the exercise of ordinary gifts, which do not so absolutely influence and regulate the faculties of the mind as the other.

And this difference we find by experience among them who are endowed with this spiritual ability. All men who have the gift of prayer do not pray alike, as to the matter of their prayers, or the manner of their praying; but some do greatly excel others, some in one thing, some in another. And this doth in part proceed from that difference that is between them in the natural abilities of invention, judgment, memory, elocution, especially as they are improved by exercise in this duty. But yet neither is this absolutely so, nor doth the difference in this matter which we observe in constant experience depend solely hereon; for if it did, then those who, having received this spiritual ability, do excel others in these natural endow-

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ments, would also constantly excel them in the exercise of the gift itself, which is not so, as is known to all who have observed any thing in this matter. But the exercise of these abilities in prayer depends on the especial assistance of the Spirit of God. And, for the most part, the gift, as the scion ingrafted or inoculated, turns the nature of those abilities into itself, and modifieth them according unto its own efficacy and virtue, and is not itself changed by them. Evidently, that which makes any such difference in the discharge of this duty as wherein the edification of others is concerned, is the frequent conscientious exercise of the gift received; without which, into whatever stock of natural abilities it may be planted, it will neither thrive nor flourish.

6. *Spiritual gifts* are of two sorts:—(1.) Such as are distinct from all other abilities, having their whole foundation, nature, and power in themselves. Such were the extraordinary gifts of miracles, healing, tongues, and the like. These were entire in themselves, not built upon or adjoined unto any other gifts or graces whatever. (2.) Such as were adjuncts of, or annexed unto, any other gifts or graces, without which they could have neither place nor use, as the gift of utterance depends on wisdom and knowledge; for utterance without knowledge, or that which is any thing but the way of expressing sound knowledge unto the benefit of others, is folly and babbling. And of this latter sort is the gift of prayer, as under our present consideration, with respect unto the interest of words in that duty. And this we affirm to be a peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost, and shall now farther prove it so to be; for,—

(1.) It is an inseparable adjunct of that work of the Spirit which we have described, and is therefore from him who is the author of it; for he who is the author of any thing as to its being is the author of all its inseparable adjuncts. That the work of enabling us to pray is the work of the Spirit hath been proved; and it is an immeasurable boldness for any to deny it, and yet pretend themselves to be Christians. And he is not the author of any one part of this work, but of the whole, all that whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." Hereunto the expression of the desires of our souls, in words suited unto the acting of our own graces and the edification of others, doth inseparably belong. When we are commanded to pray, if our necessity, condition, edification, with the advantage and benefit of others, do require the use of words in prayer, then are we so to pray. For instance, when a minister is commanded to pray in the church or congregation, so as to go before the flock in the discharge of that duty, he is to use words in prayer. Yet are we not in such cases required to pray any otherwise than as the Spirit is promised to enable us to pray, and so as that we may still be said to pray in the Holy Ghost. So, there-

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fore, to pray falls under the command and promise, and is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

And the nature of the thing itself,—that is, the duty of prayer,—doth manifest it; for all that the Spirit of God works in our hearts with respect unto this duty is in order unto the expression of it, for what he doth is to enable us to pray. And if he give not that expression, all that he doth besides may be lost as to its principal end and use: and, indeed, all that he doth in us where this is wanting, or that in fixed meditation, which in some particular cases is equivalent thereunto, riseth not beyond that frame which David expresseth by his keeping silence; whereby he declares an estate of trouble, wherein yet he was not freely brought over to deal with God about it, as he did afterward by prayer, and found relief therein.

That which with any pretence of reason can be objected hereunto,—namely, that not any part only, but the whole duty of prayer as we are commanded to pray, is an effect in us of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplication, or that the grace of prayer and the gift of prayer, as some distinguish, are inseparable,—consists in two unsound consequents, which, as is supposed, will thence ensue; as,—(1.) "That every one who hath the *grace of prayer*, as it is called, or in whom the Holy Spirit worketh the gracious disposition before described, hath also the *gift of prayer*, seeing these things are inseparable." And, (2.) "That every one who hath the *gift of prayer*, or who hath an *ability to pray* with utterance unto the edification of others, hath also the *grace of prayer*, or the actings of saving grace in prayer," which is the thing intended. But these things, it will be said, are manifestly otherwise, and contrary to all experience.

Ans. [1.] For the first of these inferences, I grant it follows from the premises, and therefore affirm that it is most true, under the ensuing limitations:—

1*st.* We do not speak of what is called the *grace of prayer* in its *habit* or principle, but in its actual exercise. In the first respect it is in all that are sanctified, even in those infants that are so from the womb. It doth not hence follow that they must also have the gift of prayer, which respects only grace in its exercise. And thus our meaning is, that all those in whom the Spirit of God doth graciously act faith, love, delight, desire, in a way of prayer unto God, have an ability from him to express themselves in vocal prayer.

2*dly.* It is required hereunto that such persons be found *in a way of duty*, and so meet to receive the influential assistance of the Holy Spirit. Whoever will use or have the benefit of any spiritual gift must himself, in a way of duty, stir up, by constant and frequent exercise, the ability wherein it doth consist: "Stir up the gift of God

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which is in thee," 2 Tim. i. 6. And where this duty is neglected,—which neglect must be accounted for,—it is no wonder if any persons who may have, as they speak, the "grace of prayer," should not yet have the gift or faculty to express their minds and desires in prayer by words of their own. Some think there is no such ability in any, and therefore never look after it in themselves, but despise whatever they hear spoken unto that purpose. What assistance such persons may have in their prayers from the Spirit of grace I know not, but it is not likely they should have much of his aid or help in that wherein they despise him. And some are so accustomed unto and so deceived by pretended helps in prayer, as making use of or reading prayers by others composed for them, that they never attempt to pray for themselves, but always think they cannot do that which, indeed, they will not; as if a child being bred up among none but such impotent persons as go on crutches, as he groweth up should refuse to try his own strength, and resolve himself to make use of crutches also. Good instruction, or some sudden surprisal with fear, removing his prejudice, he will cast away this needless help, and make use of his strength. Some gracious persons brought up where forms of prayer are in general use may have a spiritual ability of their own to pray, but neither know it nor ever try it, through a compliance with the principles of their education, yea, so as to think it impossible for them to pray any otherwise. But when instruction frees them from this prejudice, or some sudden surprisal with fear or affliction casts them into an entrance ot the exercise ot their own ability in this kind, their former aids and helps quickly grow into disuse with them.

3*dly*. The *ability* which we ascribe unto all who have the gracious assistance of the Spirit in prayer is not absolute, but suited unto their occasions, conditions, duties, callings, and the like. We do not say that every one who hath received the Spirit of grace and supplication must necessarily have a gift enabling him to pray as becomes a minister in the congregation, or any person on the like solemn occasion,—no, nor yet it may be to pray in a family, or in the company of many, if he be not in his condition of life called thereunto; but every one hath this ability according to his necessity, condition of life, and calling. He that is only a private person hath so, and he who is the ruler of the family hath so, and he that is a minister of the congregation hath so also. And as God enlargeth men's occasions and calls, so he will enlarge their abilities, provided they do what is their duty to that end and purpose; for the slothful, the negligent, the fearful, those that are under the power of prejudices, will have no share in this mercy. This, therefore, is the sum of what we affirm in this particular:—Every adult person who hath received,

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and is able to exercise, grace in prayer, any saving grace, without which prayer itself is an abomination, if he neglect not the improvement of the spiritual aids communicated unto him, doth so far partake of this gift of the Holy Spirit as to enable him to pray according as his own occasions and duty do require. He who wants mercy for the pardon of sin, or supplies of grace for the sanctification of his person, and the like, if he be sensible of his wants, and have gracious desires after their supply wrought in his heart, will be enabled to ask them of God in an acceptable manner, if he be not wofully and sinfully wanting unto himself and his own duty.

[2.] As to the second inference, namely, that if this *ability be inseparable from the gracious assistance of the Spirit of prayer, then whosoever hath this gift and ability, he hath in the exercise of it that gracious assistance*, or he hath received the Spirit of grace, and hath saving graces acted in him, I answer,—1*st*. It doth not follow on what we have asserted: for although wherever is the grace of prayer there is the gift also in its measure, yet it follows not that where the gift is there must be the grace also; for the gift is for the grace's sake, and not on the contrary. Grace cannot be acted without the gift, but the gift may without the grace. 2*dly*. We shall assent that this gift doth grow in another soil, and hath not its root in itself. It followeth on and ariseth from one distinct part of the work of the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of supplication, from which it is inseparable; and this is his work on the mind, in acquainting it with the things that are to be prayed for, which he doth both in the inward convictions of men's own souls, and in the declaration made thereof in the Scripture. Now, this may in some be only a common work of illumination, which the gift of vocal prayer may flow from and accompany, when the Spirit of grace and supplication works no farther in them. Wherefore, it is acknowledged that men in whom the Spirit of grace did never reside nor savingly operate may have the gift of utterance in prayer unto their own and others' edification; for they have the gift of illumination, which is its foundation, and from which it is inseparable. Where this spiritual illumination is not granted in some measure, no abilities, no industry, can attain the gift of utterance in prayer unto edification; for spiritual light is the matter of all spiritual gifts, which in all their variety are but the various exercise of it. And to suppose a man to have a gift of prayer without it, is to suppose him to have a gift to pray for he knows not what; which real or pretended enthusiasm we abhor. Wherefore, wherever is this gift of illumination and conviction, there is such a foundation of the gift of prayer as that it is not ordinarily absent in some measure, where due use and exercise are observed.

Add unto what hath been spoken that the duty of prayer ordi-

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narily is not complete unless it be expressed in words. It is called "pleading with God," "filling our mouths with arguments," "crying unto him," and "causing him to hear our voice;" which things are so expressed, not that they are any way needful unto God, but unto us. And whereas it may be said that all this may be done in prayer by internal meditation, where no use is made of the voice or of words, as it is said of Hannah that "she spake in her heart, but her voice was not heard," 1 Sam. i. 13, I grant in some cases it may be so, where the circumstances of the duty do not require it should be otherwise, or where the vehemency of affections, which causes men to cry out and roar, will permit it so to be. But withal I say, that in this prayer by meditation, the things and matter of prayer are to be formed in the mind into that sense and those sentences which may be expressed; and the mind can conceive no more in this way of prayer than it can express. So of Hannah it is said, when she prayed in her heart, and, as she said herself, "out of the abundance of her meditation," verse 16, that "her lips moved," though "her voice was not heard;" she not only framed the sense of her supplications into petitions, but tacitly expressed them to herself. And the obligation of any person unto prescribed forms is as destructive of prayer by inward meditation as it is of prayer conceived and expressed; for it takes away the liberty and prevents the ability of framing petitions, or any other parts of prayer, in the mind according to the sense which the party praying hath of them. Wherefore, if this expression of prayer in words do necessarily belong unto the duty itself, it is an effect of the Holy Spirit, or he is not the Spirit of supplication unto us.

(2.) *Utterance* is a peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost: so it is mentioned, 1 Cor. i. 5; 2 Cor. viii. 7; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3. And hereof there are two parts, or there are two duties to be discharged by virtue of it:—[1.] An ability to speak untó men in the name of God in the preaching of the word; [2.] An ability to speak unto God for ourselves, or in the name and on the behalf of others. And there is the same reason of utterance in both these duties; and in each of them it is equally a peculiar gift of the Spirit of God. See 1 Cor. i. 5; 2 Cor. viii. 7; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3. The word used in these places is λόγος, "speech," which is well rendered "utterance,"—that is, παῤῥησία ἐν τῷ ἀποφθέγγεσθαι, "facultas et libertas dicendi," an ability and liberty to speak out the things we have conceived: Λόγος ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματος ἐν παῤῥησίᾳ, Eph. vi. 19,—"Utterance in the opening of the mouth with boldness," or rather freedom of speech. This in sacred things, in praying and preaching, is the gift of the Holy Spirit; and as such are we enjoined to pray for it that it may be given unto us or others, as the edification of

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the church doth require. And although this gift may by some be despised, yet the whole edification of the church depends upon it; yea, the foundation of the church was laid in it, as it was an extraordinary gift, Acts ii. 4; and its superstructure is carried on by it, for it is the sole means of public or solemn intercourse between God and the church. It is so if there be such a thing as the Holy Ghost, if there be such things as spiritual gifts. The matter of them is spiritual light, and the manner of their exercise is utterance.

This gift or ability, as all others of the like nature, may be considered either as to the habit or as to the external exercise of it. And those who have received it in the habit have yet experience of great variety in the exercise, which in natural and moral habits, where the same preparations precede, doth not usually appear; for as the Spirit of grace is free, and acts arbitrarily with respect unto the persons unto whom he communicates the gift himself, for "he divideth to every man as he will," so he acteth also as he pleases in the exercise of those gifts and graces which he doth bestow. Hence believers do sometimes find a greater evidence of his gracious working in them in prayer, or of his assistance to pray, as also enlargement in utterance, than at other times; for in both he breatheth and acteth as he pleaseth. These things are not their own, nor absolutely in their own power; nor will either the habitual grace they have received enable them to pray graciously, nor their gift of utterance unto edification, without his actual excitation of that grace and his assistance in the exercise of that gift. Both the conceiving and utterance of our desires in an acceptable manner are from him; and so are all spiritual enlargements in this duty. Vocal prayer, whether private or public, whereof we speak, is the uttering of our desires and requests unto God, called "the making of our requests known unto him," Phil. iv. 6. This utterance is a gift of the Holy Ghost; so also is prayer as to the manner of the performance of it, by words in supplication. And if any one say he cannot so pray suitably unto his own occasions, he doth only say that he is a stranger to this gift of the Holy Ghost; and if any one will not, by him it is despised. And if these things are denied by any because they understand them not, we cannot help it.

(3.) *It is the Holy Spirit that enables men to discharge and perform every duty that is required of them in a due manner, so that without his enabling of us we can do nothing as we should.* As this hath been sufficiently confirmed in other discourses on this subject, so we will not always contend with them by whom such fundamental principles of Christianity are denied or called into question. And he doth so with respect unto all sorts of duties, whether such as are required of us by virtue of especial office and calling, or on

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the more general account of a holy conversation according to the will of God. And vocal prayer is a duty under both these considerations; for,—

[1.] It is the duty of the *ministers* of the gospel by virtue of especial office. "Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks," are to be made in the assemblies of the church, 1 Tim. ii. 1. Herein it is the office and duty of ministers to go before the congregation, and to be as the mouth of the church unto God. The nature of the office and the due discharge of it, with what is necessary unto the religious worship of public assemblies, manifest it so to be. The apostles, as their example, "gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word," Acts vi. 4. It is therefore the gift of the Holy Ghost whereby these are enabled so to do; for of themselves they are not able to do any thing. This is one of those "good gifts" which are "from above, and come down from the Father of lights," James i. 17. And these gifts do they receive "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," Eph. iv. 12. Utterance, therefore, in praying and preaching, is in them the gift of the Holy Ghost with respect unto their office; and that such a gift as those who are utterly destitute of it cannot discharge their office unto the edification of the church.

Let men pretend what they please, if a spiritual ability in praying and preaching belong not necessarily unto the office of the ministry, no man can tell what doth so, or what the office signifies in the church; for no other ordinance can be administered without the word and prayer, nor any part of rule itself in a due manner. And to deny these to be gifts of the Holy Ghost is to deny the continuance of his dispensation unto and in the church; which at once overthrows the whole truth of the gospel and the sole foundation that the ministry of it is built upon.

[2.] The like may be spoken with respect unto duties to be performed by virtue of our *general vocation*. Such are the duties of parents and masters of families. I know not how far any are gone in ways of profaneness, but hope none are carried unto such a length as to deny it to be the duty of such persons to pray with their families as well as for them. The families that call not on the name of the Lord are under his curse. And if this be their duty, the performance of it must be by the aid of the Spirit of God, by virtue of the general rule we proceed upon.

(4.) *The benefit, profit, advantage, and edification of particular persons, of families, but especially of the church in its assemblies, in and by the use and exercise of this gift, are such and so great as that it is impious not to ascribe it to the operation of the Holy*

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Spirit. Men are not of themselves, without his especial aid, authors or causers of the principal spiritual benefit and advantage which the church receiveth in the world. If they are so, or may be so, what need is there of him or his work for the preservation and edification of the church? But that it hath this blessed effect and fruit, we plead the experience of all who desire to walk before God in sincerity, and leave the determination of the question unto the judgment of God himself. Nor will we at present refuse in our plea a consideration of the different conditions, as to a holy conversation, between them who constantly, in their life and at their death, give this testimony, and theirs by whom it is opposed and denied. We are none of us to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor of any effect of his grace. It must therefore be said, that the experience which believers of all sorts have of the spiritual benefit and advantage of this ability, both in themselves and others, is not to be moved or shaken by the cavils or reproaches of such as dare profess themselves to be strangers thereunto.

(5.) The *event of things* may be pleaded in evidence of the same truth: for were not the ability of praying a gift of Him who divideth to every one according unto his own will, there would not be that difference, as to the participation of it among those who all pretend unto the faith of the same truth, as there is openly and visibly in the world; and if it were a matter purely of men's natural abilities, it were impossible that so many, whose concern it is in the highest degree to be interested in it, should be such strangers to it, so unacquainted with it, and so unable for it. They say, indeed, "It is but the mere improvement of natural abilities, with confidence and exercise." Let it be supposed for once that some of them at least have confidence competent unto such a work, and let them try what success mere exercise will furnish them withal. In the meantime I deny that, without that illumination of the mind which is a peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost, the ability of prayer treated of is attainable by any. And it will be a hard thing to persuade persons of any ordinary consideration that the difference which they do or may discover between men as to this gift and ability proceeds merely from the difference of their natural and acquired abilities; wherein, as it is strenuously pretended, the advantage is commonly on that side which is most defective herein.

Some, perhaps, may say that they know there is nothing in this faculty but the exercise of natural endowments, with boldness and elocution, and that because they themselves were expert in it, and found nothing else therein; on which ground they have left it for that which is better. But, for evident reasons, we will not be bound to stand unto the testimony of those men, although they shall not

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here be pleaded. In the meantime, we know that "from him which hath not is taken away that which he had." And it is no wonder if persons endowed sometimes with a gift of prayer proportionable unto their light and illumination, improving neither the one nor the other as they ought, have lost both their light and gift also.

And thus, suitably unto my design and purpose, I have given a delineation of the work of the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of grace and supplication, promised unto and bestowed on all believers, enabling them to cry, "Abba, Father."

CHAPTER IX.

Duties inferred from the preceding discourse.

THE issue of all our inquiries is, how we may improve them unto obedience in the life of God; for "if we know them, happy are we if we do them," and not otherwise. And our practice herein may be reduced unto these two heads:—1. A due and constant *returning of glory unto God* on the account of his grace in that *free gift of his* whose nature we have inquired into. 2. A constant *attendance* unto the duty which we are graciously enabled unto thereby. And,—

1. (1.) We ought continually to bless God and give glory to him for this great *privilege* of *the Spirit of grace and supplication* granted unto the church.[1] This is the principal means on their part of all holy intercourse with God, and of giving glory unto him. How doth the world, which is destitute of this fruit of divine bounty, grope in the dark and wander after vain imaginations, whilst it knows not how to manage its convictions, nor how at all to deal with God about its concerns! That world which cannot receive the Spirit of grace and truth can never have aught to do with God in a due manner. There are by whom this gift of God is despised, is reviled, is blasphemed; and under the shades of many pretences do they hide themselves from the light in their so doing. But they know not what they do, nor by what spirit they are acted. Our duty it is to pray that God would pour forth his Spirit even on them also, who will quickly cause them to "look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn."

And it appears two ways how great a mercy it is to enjoy and improve this privilege:—[1.] In that both the psalmist and the prophet pray directly, in a spirit of prophecy, and without limitation, that God would "pour out his fury on the families that call not on his

[1] Τίς οὖν ἂν ἐκπλαγείη καὶ θαυμάσειε τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίαν, ἣν εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐπιδείκνυται, τοσαύτην τιμὴν ἀνθρώποις χαριζόμενος, ὡς καὶ προσευχῆς ἀξιῶσαι καὶ ὁμιλίας τῆς πνευμάτων! Θεῷ γὰρ ἀληθῶς λαλοῦμεν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς προσευχῆς.—Chrys. Hom. lxvii. de Prec. 1.

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name," Ps. lxxix. 6; Jer. x. 25. And, [2.] In that the whole work of faith in obedience is denominated from this duty of prayer, for so it is said that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," Rom. x. 13; for invocation or prayer, in the power of the Spirit of grace and supplication, is an infallible evidence and fruit of saving faith and obedience, and therefore is the promise of salvation so eminently annexed unto it, or it is placed by a *synecdoche* for the whole worship of God and obedience of faith. And it were endless to declare the benefits that the church of God, and every one that belongeth thereunto, hath thereby. No heart can conceive that treasury of mercies which lies in this one privilege, in having liberty and ability to approach unto God at all times, according unto his mind and will. This is the relief, the refuge, the weapons, and assured refreshment, of the church in all conditions.

(2.) It is a matter of praise and glory to God, in an especial manner, that he hath granted an *ampliation* of this privilege under the gospel. The Spirit is now poured forth from above, and enlarged in his dispensation, both intensively and extensively. Those on whom he is bestowed do receive him in a larger measure than they did formerly under the Old Testament. Thence is that liberty and boldness in their access unto the throne of grace, and their crying "Abba, Father," which the apostle reckons among the great privileges of the dispensation of the Spirit of Christ, which they of old were not partakers of. If the difference between the Old Testament state and the New lay only in the outward letter and the rule thereof, it would not be so easily discerned on which side the advantage lay; especially, methinks, it should not be so by them who seem really to prefer the pomp of legal worship before the plainness and simplicity of the gospel. But he who understands what it is not to "receive the spirit of bondage to fear," but to "receive the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father," and what it is to "serve God in the newness of the Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter," understands their difference well enough. And I cannot but admire that some will make use of arguments, or a pretence of them, for such helps and forms of prayer as seem not compliant with the work of the Spirit of supplication before described, from the Old Testament, and the practice of the church of the Jews before the time of our Saviour, though indeed they can prove nothing from thence; for do they not acknowledge that there is a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit on the church under the New Testament than under the Old? To deny it is to take away the principal difference between the law and the gospel. And is not the performance of duties to be regulated according to the supplies of grace? If we should suppose that the people, being then carnal, and obliged to the obser-

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vation of carnal ordinances, did in this particular stand in need of forms of prayer,—which indeed they did not, of those which were merely so and only so, nor had, that we know of, any use of them, —doth it follow that therefore believers under the New Testament, who have unquestionably a larger portion of the Spirit of grace and supplication poured on them, should either stand in need of them or be obliged unto them? And it is in vain to pretend a different dispensation of the Spirit unto them and us, where different fruits and effects are not acknowledged. He that hath been under the power of the law, and hath been set free by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, knows the difference, and will be thankful for the grace that is in it.

Again; it is extensively enlarged, in that it is now communicated unto multitudes, whereas of old it was confined unto a few. Then the dews of it only watered the land of Canaan, and the posterity of Abraham according to the flesh; now the showers of it are poured down on all nations, even on "all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." In every assembly of mount Zion through the world, called according to the mind of Christ, prayers and supplications are offered unto God through the effectual working of the Spirit of grace and supplication, unless he be despised. And this is done in the accomplishment of that great promise, Mal. i. 11, "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts." Prayer and praises in the assemblies of the saints is the pure offering and that sacrifice which God promiseth shall be offered unto him. And this oblation is not to be kindled without the eternal fire of the Spirit of grace. No sacrifice was to be offered of old but with fire taken from the altar. Be it what it would, if it were offered with strange fire, it was an abomination; hence they were all called אִשֵּׁי, the "firings" of the LORD. And this was in a resemblance of the Holy Ghost; whence Christ is said to "offer himself to God through the eternal Spirit." And so must we do our prayers. In the fruits and effects of his works lies all the glory and beauty of our assemblies and worship. Take them away, and they are contemptible, dead, and carnal. And he carrieth this work into the families of them that do believe. Every family apart is enabled to pray and serve God in the spirit; and such as are not do live in darkness all their days. He is the same to believers all the world over, in their closets or their prisons. They have all, wherever they are, an "access by one Spirit unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18. And for this enlargement of grace God justly expects a revenue of glory from us.

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2. (1.) It is, assuredly, our duty to *make use* of the gift of the Spirit, as that which is purchased for us by Christ,[1] and is of inestimable advantage unto our souls. There are two ways whereby men may be guilty of the neglect of this heavenly favour:—[1.] They are so when the gift itself is not valued nor sought after, nor endeavoured to be attained. And this is done under various pretences. Some imagine that it is no gift of the Spirit, and so despise it; others think that either by them it is not attainable, or that if it be attained it will not answer the labour in it and diligence about it which it doth require, and therefore take up with another way and means, which they know to be more easy, and hope to be as useful; by many the whole duty is despised, and consequently all assistance in the performance of it is so also. None of these do I speak unto at present. But, [2.] We are guilty of this neglect when we do not constantly and diligently, on all occasions, make use of it for the end for which it is given us, yea, abound in the exercise of it. Have you an ability to pray always freely given you by the Holy Ghost? why do you not pray always, in private, in families, according to all occasions and opportunities administered? Of what concernment unto the glory of God, and in our living unto him, prayer is, will be owned by all. It is that only single duty wherein every grace is acted, every sin opposed, every good thing obtained, and the whole of our obedience in every instance of it is concerned. What difficulties lie in the way of its due performance, what discouragements rise up against it, how unable we are of ourselves in a due manner to discharge it, what aversation there is in corrupted nature unto it, what distractions and weariness are apt to befall us under it, are generally known also unto them who are any way exercised in these things. Yet doth the blessedness of our present and future condition much depend thereon. To relieve us against all these things, to "help our infirmities," to give us freedom, liberty, and confidence in our approaches to the throne of grace, to enable us as children to cry, "Abba, Father," with delight and complacency, is this gift of the Spirit of grace and supplication given unto us by Jesus Christ. Who can express how great a folly and sin it is not to be found in the constant exercise of it? Can we by any means more "grieve this Holy Spirit" and endamage our own souls? Hath God given unto us the Spirit of grace and supplication, and shall we be remiss, careless, and negligent in prayer? Is not this the worst way whereby we may "quench the Spirit," which we are so cautioned against? Can we go from day to day in the neglect of opportunities, occasions,

[1] "Ωσπερ τῷ σώματι φῶς ἥλιος, οὕτω ψυχῇ προσευχή· εἰ οὖν τυφλῷ ζημία τὸ μὴ ὁρᾶν τὸν ἥλιον, ποία ζημία Χριστιανῷ τὸ μὴ προσεύχεσθαι συνεχῶς καὶ διὰ τῆς προσευχῆς τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ φῶς εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν εἰσάγειν;—Chrys. Hom. lxvii. de Prec. 1.

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and just seasons of prayer? How shall we answer for the contempt of this gracious aid offered us by Jesus Christ? Do others go from day to day in a neglect of this duty in their closets and families? Blame them not, or at least they are not worthy of so much blame as we; they know not how to pray, they have no ability for it. But for those to walk in a neglect hereof who have received this gift of the Holy Ghost enabling them thereunto, making it easy unto them and pleasant unto the inner man, how great an aggravation is it of their sin! Shall others at the tinkling of a bell rise and run unto prayers to be said or sung, wherein they can have no spiritual interest, only to pacify their consciences, and comply with the prejudices of their education, and shall we be found in the neglect of that spiritual aid which is graciously afforded unto us? How will the blind devotion and superstition of multitudes, with their diligence and pains therein, rise up in judgment against such negligent persons! We may see in the Papacy how, upon the ringing of a bell, or the lifting up of any ensign of superstition, they will some of them rise at midnight; others in their houses, yea, in the streets, fall on their knees unto their devotions. Having lost the conduct of the Spirit of God, and his gracious guidance unto the performance of duty in its proper seasons, they have invented ways of their own to keep up a frequency in this duty after their manner; which they are true and punctual unto. And shall they who have received that Spirit which the world cannot receive be treacherous and disobedient unto his motions, or what he constantly inclines and enables them unto? Besides all other disadvantages which will accrue hereby unto our souls, who can express the horrible ingratitude of such a sin? I press it the more, and that unto all sorts of prayer, in private, in families, in assemblies for that end, because the temptations and dangers of the days wherein we live do particularly and eminently call for it. If we would talk less and pray more about them, things would be better than they are in the world; at least, we should be better enabled to bear them, and undergo our portion in them with the more satisfaction. To be negligent herein at such a season is a sad token of such a security as foreruns destruction.

(2.) Have any received this gift of the Holy Ghost?—let them know that it is their duty *to cherish it, to stir it up and improve it.* It is freely bestowed, but it is carefully to be preserved. It is a gospel talent given to be traded withal, and thereby to be increased. There are various degrees and measures of this gift in those that do receive it; but whatever measure any one hath, from the greatest to the least, he is obliged to cherish, preserve, and improve. We do not assert such a gift of prayer as should render our diligence therein unnecessary, or the exercise of our natural abilities useless; yea, the

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end of this gift is to enable us to the diligent exercise of the faculties of our souls in prayer in a due manner. And, therefore, as it is our duty to use it, so it is to improve it. And it is one reason against the restraint of forms, because there is in them too little exercise of the faculties of our minds in the worship of God. Therefore, this being our duty, it may be inquired by what way or means we may stir up this grace and gift of God, so at least as that if, through any weakness or infirmity of mind, we thrive not much in the outward part of it, yet that we decay not nor lose what we have received. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are the fire that kindleth all our sacrifices to God. Now, although that fire of old on the altar first came down from heaven, or "forth from the LORD," Lev. ix. 24, yet after it was once there placed it was always to be kept alive with care and diligence; for otherwise it would have been extinguished as any other fire, chap. vi. 12, 13. Hence the apostle warns Timothy, ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα, 2 Tim. i. 6, to excite and "quicken the fire of his gift," by blowing off the ashes and adding fuel unto it. Now, there are many things that are useful and helpful unto this end; as,—

[1.] A constant *consideration and observation of ourselves*, our own hearts, with our spiritual state and condition. Thence are the matters of our requests or petitions in prayer to be taken, Ps. xvi. 7. And as our state in general, by reason of the depths and deceitfulness of our hearts, with our darkness in spiritual things, is such as will find us matter of continual search and examination all the days of our lives, as is expressed in those prayers, Ps. xix. 12, cxxxix. 23, 24, so we are subject unto various changes and alterations in our spiritual frames and actings every day, as also unto temptations of all sorts. About these things, according as our occasions and necessities do require, are we to deal with God in our supplications, Phil. iv. 6. How shall we be in a readiness hereunto, prepared with the proper matter of prayer, if we neglect a constant and diligent observation of ourselves herein, or the state of our own souls? This being the food of the gift, where it is neglected the gift itself will decay. If men consider only a form of things in a course, they will quickly come to a form of words.

To assist us in this search and examination of ourselves, to give light into our state and wants, to make us sensible thereof, is part of the work of the Spirit as a Spirit of grace and supplication; and if we neglect our duty towards him herein how can we expect that he should continue his aid unto us, as to the outward part of the duty? Wherefore, let a man speak in prayer with the tongues of men and angels, to the highest satisfaction, and, it may be, good edification of others, yet if he be negligent, if he be not wise and watchful, in this

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duty of considering the state, actings, and temptations of his own soul, he hath but a perishing, decaying outside and shell of this gift of the Spirit. And those by whom this self-search and judgment is attended unto shall ordinarily thrive in the power and life of this duty. By this means may we know the beginnings and entrances of temptation; the deceitful actings of indwelling sin; the risings of particular corruptions, with the occasions yielding them advantages and power; the supplies of grace which we daily receive, and ways of deliverance. And as he who prayeth without a due consideration of these things prayeth at random, "fighting uncertainly as one beating the air," so he whose heart is filled with a sense of them will have always in a readiness the due matter of prayer, and will be able to fill his mouth with pleas and arguments whereby the gift itself will be cherished and strengthened.

[2.] *Constant searching of the Scripture* unto the same purpose is another subservient duty unto this of prayer itself. That is the glass wherein we may take the best view of ourselves, because it at once represents both what we are and what we ought to be; what we are in ourselves, and what we are by the grace of God; what are our frames, actions, and ways, and what is their defect in the sight of God. And a higher instruction what to pray for, or how to pray, cannot be given us, Ps. xix. 7–9. Some imagine that to "search the Scriptures," thence to take forms of speech or expressions accommodated unto all the parts of prayer, and to set them in order, or retain them in memory, is a great help to prayer. Whatever it be, it is not that which I intend at present. It is most true, if a man be "mighty in the Scriptures," singularly conversant and exercised in them, abounding in their senses and expressions, and have the help of a faithful memory withal, it may exceedingly further and assist him in the exercise of this gift unto the edification of others. But this collection of phrases, speeches, and expressions, where perhaps the mind is barren in the sense of the Scripture, I know not of what use it is. That which I press for is, a diligent search into the Scriptures as to the things revealed in them: for therein are our wants in all their circumstances and consequents discovered and represented unto us; and so are the supplies of grace and mercy which God hath provided for us;—the former with authority, to make us sensible of them; and the latter with that evidence of grace and faithfulness as to encourage us to make our requests for them. The word is the instrument whereby the Holy Spirit reveals unto us our wants, when we know not what to ask, and so enables us to make intercessions according to the mind of God, Rom. viii. 26, 27; yea, who is it who almost at any time reading the Scripture, with a due reverence of God, and subjection of conscience unto him, hath not some particular matter of

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prayer or praise effectually suggested unto him? And Christians would find no small advantage, on many accounts not here to be insisted upon, if they would frequently, if not constantly, turn what they read into prayer or praise unto God, whereby the instructions unto faith and obedience would be more confirmed in their minds, and their hearts be more engaged into their practice. An example hereof we have, Ps. cxix., wherein all considerations of God's will and our duty are turned into petitions.

[3.] A due *meditation on God's glorious excellencies* tends greatly to the cherishing of this gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. There is no example that we have of prayer in the Scripture but the entrance into it consists in expressions of the name, and most commonly of some of the glorious titles of God, whereunto the remembrance of some mighty acts of his power is usually added. And the nature of the thing requires it should be so; for besides that God hath revealed his name unto us for this very purpose, that we might call upon him by the name which he owns and takes to himself, it is necessary we should by some external description determine our minds unto him to whom we make our addresses, seeing we cannot conceive any image or idea of him therein. Now, the end hereof is twofold:—1*st*. To ingenerate in us that reverence and godly fear which is required of all that draw nigh to this infinitely holy God, Lev. x. 3; Heb. xii. 28. The most signal encouragement unto boldness in prayer, and an access to God thereby, is in Heb. x. 19–22, with chap. iv. 16. Into the holy place we may go with boldness, and unto the throne of grace. And it is a throne of grace that God in Christ is represented unto us upon; but yet it is a throne still whereon majesty and glory do reside, and God is always to be considered by us as on a throne. 2*dly*. Faith and confidence are excited and acted unto a due frame thereby; for prayer is our betaking ourselves unto God as our shield, our rock, and our reward, Prov. xviii. 10. Wherefore, a due previous consideration of those holy properties of his nature which may encourage us so to do, and assure us in our so doing, is necessary. And this being so great a part of prayer, the great foundation of supplication and praise, frequent meditation on these holy excellencies of the divine nature must needs be an excellent preparation for the whole duty, by filling the heart with a sense of those things which the mouth is to express, and making ready those graces for their exercise which is required therein.

[4.] Meditation on the *mediation and intercession of Christ*, for our encouragement, is of the same importance and tendency. To this end spiritually is he proposed unto us as abiding in the discharge of his priestly office, Heb. iv. 15, 16, x. 19–22. And this is not only an encouragement unto and in our supplications, but a means to in-

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crease and strengthen the grace and gift of prayer itself; for the mind is thereby made ready to exercise itself about the effectual interposition of the Lord Christ at the throne of grace in our behalf, which hath a principal place and consideration in the prayers of all believers. And hereby, principally, may we try our faith of what race and kind it is, whether truly evangelical or no. Some relate or talk that the eagle tries the eyes of her young ones by turning them to the sun; which if they cannot look steadily on, she rejects them as spurious. We may truly try our faith by immediate intuitions of the Sun of Righteousness. Direct faith to act itself immediately and directly on the incarnation of Christ and his mediation; and if it be not of the right kind and race it will turn its eye aside unto any thing else. God's essential properties, his precepts and promises, it can bear a fixed consideration of; but it cannot fix itself on the person and mediation of Christ with steadiness and satisfaction. There is, indeed, much profession of Christ in the world, but little faith in him.

[5.] *Frequency in exercise* is the immediate way and means of the increase of this gift and its improvement. All spiritual gifts are bestowed on men to be employed and exercised; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal," 1 Cor. xii. 7. God both requireth that his talents be traded withal, that his gifts be employed and exercised, and will also call us to an account of the discharge of the trust committed unto us in them. See 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11. Wherefore, the exercise of this and of the like gifts tends unto their improvement on a double account; for,—1*st*. Whereas they reside in the mind after the manner and nature of a habit or a faculty, it is natural that they should be increased and strengthened by exercise, as all habits are by a multiplication of acts proceeding from them. So also by desuetude they will weaken, decay, and in the issue be utterly lost and perish. So is it with many as to the gift of prayer. They were known to have received it in some good measure of usefulness unto their own edification and that of others; but upon a neglect of the use and exercise of it in public and private,—which seldom goes alone without some secret or open enormities,—they have lost all their ability, and cannot open their mouths on any occasion in prayer beyond what is prescribed unto them or composed for them. But the just hand of God is also in this matter, depriving them of what they had, for their abominable neglect of his grace and bounty therein. 2*dly*. The increase will be added unto, by virtue of God's blessing on his own appointment; for having bestowed these gifts for that end, where persons are faithful in the discharge of the trust committed unto them, he will graciously add unto them in what they have. This is the eternal law concern-

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ing the dispensation of evangelical gifts, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath," Matt. xxv. 29. It is not the mere having or not having of them that is intended, but the using or not using of what we have received, as is plain in the context. Now, I do not say that a man may or ought to exercise himself in prayer merely with this design, that he may preserve and improve his gift. It may, indeed, in some cases be lawful for a man to have respect hereunto, but not [to this] only; as where a master of a family hath any one in his family who is able to discharge that duty and can attend unto it, yet he will find it his wisdom not to omit his own performance of it, unless he be contented that his gift, as to the use of his family, should wither and decay. But all that I plead is, that he who conscientiously, with respect unto all the ends of prayer, doth abound in the exercise of this gift, shall assuredly thrive and grow in it, or at least preserve it in answer unto the measure of the gift of Christ: for I do not propose these things as though every man in the diligent use of them may constantly grow and thrive in that part of the gift which consists in utterance and expression; for there is a "measure of the gift of Christ" assigned unto every one, whose bounds he shall not pass, Eph. iv. 7. But in these paths and ways the gift which they have received will be preserved, kept thrifty and flourishing; and from the least beginnings of a participation of it, they will be carried on unto their own proper measure, which is sufficient for them.

[6.] *Constant fervency and intension of mind and spirit* in this duty works directly towards the same end. Men may multiply prayers as to the outward work in them, and yet not have the least spiritual advantage by them. If they are dull, dead, and slothful in them, if under the power of customariness and formality, what issue can they expect? Fervency and intension of mind quickeneth and enlargeth the faculties, and leaveth vigorous impressions upon them of the things treated about in our supplications. The whole soul is cast into the mould of the matter of our prayers, and is thereby prepared and made ready for continual fresh spiritual engagements about them. And this fervency we intend consists not in the vehemency or loudness of words, but in the intension of the mind; for the earnestness or vehemency of the voice is allowable only in two cases: 1*st*. When the edification of the congregation doth require it, which being numerous cannot hear what is spoken unless a man lift up his voice; 2*dly*. When the vehemency of affections will bear no restraint, Ps. xxii. 1, Heb. v. 7.

Now, as all these are means whereby the gift of prayer may be cherished, preserved, and improved, so are they all of them the ways

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whereby grace acts itself in prayer, and have, therefore, an equal respect unto the whole work of the Spirit of supplication in us.

(3.) Our duty it is to use *this gift of prayer unto the ends for which it is freely bestowed on us.* And it is given,—[1.] With respect unto themselves who do receive it; and, [2.] With respect unto the benefit and advantage of others. And, [1.] With respect unto them that receive it, its end is, and it is a blessed means and help, to stir up, excite, quicken, and act all those graces of the Spirit whereby they have communion with God in this duty. Such are faith, love, delight, joy, and the like; for, 1*st.* Under the conduct of this gift, the mind and soul are led unto the consideration of, and are fixed on, the proper objects of those graces, with the due occasions of their exercise. When men are bound unto a form, they can act grace only by the things that are expressed therein; which, whatever any apprehend, is strait and narrow, compared with the extent of that divine intercourse with God which is needful unto believers in this duty. But in the exercise of this gift there is no concernment of faith, or love, or delight, but it is presented unto them, and they are excited unto a due exercise about them. Unto this end, therefore, is it to be used,—namely, as a means to stir up and act those graces and holy affections in whose working and exercise the life and efficacy of prayer doth consist. 2*dly.* Although the exercise of the gift itself ought to be nothing but the way of those graces acting themselves towards God in this duty (for words are supplied only to clothe and express gracious desires, and when they wholly exceed them they are of no advantage), yet as by virtue of the gift the mind is able to comprehend and manage the things about which those graces and gracious desires are to be exercised, so in the use of expressions they are quickened and engaged therein. For as when a man hath heard of a miserable object, he is moved with compassion towards it, but when he cometh to behold it "his own eye affecteth his heart," as the prophet speaks, Lam. iii. 51, whereby his compassion is actually moved and increased; so, although a man hath a comprehension in his mind of the things of prayer, and is affected with them, yet his own words also will affect his heart, and by reflection stir up and inflame spiritual affections. So do many, even in private, find advantage in the use of their own gift, beyond what they can attain in mere mental prayer; which must be spoken unto afterward.

Again, [2.] This gift respecteth others, and is to be used unto that end: for as it is appointed of God to be exercised in societies, families, church-assemblies, and occasionally for the good of any, so it is designed for their edification and profit; for there is in it an ability of expressing the wants, desires, and prayers of others also. And as this discharge of the duty is in a peculiar manner incumbent

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on ministers of the gospel, as also on masters of families and others, as they are occasionally called thereunto, so they are to attend unto a fourfold direction therein:—

1*st.* Unto their own *experience.* If such persons are believers themselves, they have experience in their own souls of all the general concernments of those in the same condition. As sin worketh in one, so it doth in another; as grace is effectual in one, so it is in another; as he that prayeth longeth for mercy and grace, so do they that join with him. Of the same kind with his hatred of sin, his love to Christ, his labouring after holiness and conformity to the will of God, are also those in other believers. And hence it is that persons "praying in the Spirit" according to their own experience are oftentimes supposed by every one in the congregation rather to pray over their condition than their own. And so it will be whilst the same corruption in kind, and the same grace in kind, with the same kind of operations, are in them all. But this extends not itself unto particular sins and temptations, which are left unto every one to deal about between God and their own souls.

2*dly.* Unto *Scripture light.* This is that which lively expresseth the spiritual state and condition of all sorts of persons,—namely, both of those that are unregenerate, and of those which are converted unto God. Whatever that expresseth concerning either sort may safely be pleaded with God in their behalf; and hence may abundant matter of prayer be taken for all occasions. Especially may it be so in a peculiar manner from that holy summary of the church's desires to God given us in the Lord's Prayer. All we can duly apprehend, spiritually understand, and draw out of that mine and heavenly treasury of prayer, may be safely used in the name and behalf of the whole church of God; but without understanding of the things intended, the use of the words profiteth not.

3*dly.* Unto an *observation of their ways and walking*, with whatever overt discovery they make of their condition and temptations. He who is constantly to be the mouth of others to God is not to pray at random, as though all persons and conditions were alike unto him. None prayeth for others constantly, by virtue of especial duty, but he is called also to watch over them and observe their ways. In so doing he may know that of their state which may be a great direction unto his supplications with them and for them. Yea, without this no man can ever discharge this duty aright in the behalf of others, so as they may find their particular concernments therein. And if a minister be obliged to consider the ways, light, knowledge, and walking of his flock, in his preaching unto them, that what he teacheth may be suited unto their edification, he is no less bound unto the same consideration in his prayers

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also with them and for them, if he intend to pray unto their use and profit. The like may be said of others in their capacity. The wisdom and caution which are to be used herein I may not here insist upon.

4thly. Unto the *account which they receive from themselves concerning their wants,* their state and condition. This, in some cases, persons are obliged to give unto those whose duty it is to help them by their prayers, James v. 16. And if this duty were more attended unto, the minds of many might receive inconceivable relief thereby.

(4.) Let us take heed,—[1.] That this gift be not *solitary* or alone; and, [2.] That it be not *solitarily acted* at any time. [1.] When it is solitary,—that is, where the gift of prayer is in the mind, but no grace to exercise in prayer in the heart,—it is at best but a part of that form of godliness which men may have, and deny the power thereof; and is, therefore, consistent with all sorts of secret lusts and abominations. And it were easy to demonstrate that whatever advantage others may have by this gift in them who are destitute of saving grace, yet themselves are many ways worsted by it; for hence are they lifted up with spiritual pride, which is the ordinary consequent of all unsanctified light, and hereby do they countenance themselves against the reflections of their consciences on the guilt of other sins, resting and pleasing themselves in their own performances. But, to the best observation that I have been able to make, of all spiritual gifts which may be communicated for a time unto unsanctified minds, this doth soonest decay and wither. Whether it be that God takes it away judicially from them, or that themselves are not able to bear the exercise of it, because it is diametrically opposite unto the lusts wherein they indulge themselves, for the most part it quickly and visibly decays, especially in such as with whom the continuance of it, by reason of open sins and apostasy, might be a matter of danger or scandal unto others. [2.] Let it not be acted solitarily. Persons in whom is a principle of spiritual life and grace, who are endowed with those graces of the Spirit which ought to be acted in all our supplications, may yet, even in the use and exercise of this gift, neglect to stir them up and act them. And there is no greater evidence of a weak, sickly, spiritual constitution, than often to be surprised into this miscarriage. Now, this is so when men in their prayers engage only their light, invention, memory, and elocution, without especial actings of faith and delight in God. And he who watcheth his soul and its actings may easily discern when he is sinfully negligent in this matter, or when outward circumstances and occasions have made him more to attend unto the gift than unto the grace in prayer; for which he will be humbled.

And these few things I thought meet to add concerning the due use and improvement of this gift of the Spirit of God.

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CHAPTER X.

Of mental prayer as pretended unto by some in the church of Rome.

HAVING described or given an account of the *gift of prayer*, and the use of it in the church of God, and the nature of the work of the Spirit therein, it will be necessary to consider briefly what is by some set up in competition with it, as a more excellent way in this part of divine worship. And, in the first place, *mental prayer*, as described by some devout persons of the church of Rome, is preferred above it. They call it "pure spiritual prayer, or a quiet repose of contemplation; that which excludes all images of the fancy, and in time all perceptible actuations of the understanding, and is exercised in signal elevations of the will, without any force at all, yet with admirable efficacy." And to dispose a soul for such prayer, there is previously required "an entire calmness and even death of the passions, a perfect purity in the spiritual affections of the will, and an entire abstraction from all creatures."—Cressy, Church Hist. pref. parag. 42, 43.

1. The truth is, I am so fixed in a dislike of that mere outside, formal course of reading or singing prayers which is in use in the Roman church (which though, in Mr Cressy's esteem, it have a show of a very civil conversation with God, yet is it indeed accompanied with the highest contempt of his infinite purity and all divine excellencies), and do so much more abhor that *magical incantation* which many among them use, in the repetition of words which they understand not, or of applying what they repeat to another end than what the words signify,—as saying so many prayers for such an end or purpose, whereof it may be there is not one word of mention in the prayers themselves,—that I must approve of any search after a *real internal intercourse of soul* with God in this duty. But herein men must be careful of two things: (1.) That they assert not what they can *fancy*, but what indeed, in some measure, they have an *experience* of. For men to conjecture what others do experience (for they can do no more), and thence to form rules or examples of duty, is dangerous always, and may be pernicious unto those who shall follow such instructions. And herein this author fails, and gives nothing but his own fancies of others' pretended experience. (2.) That what they pretend unto an experience of be confirmable by Scripture rule or example; for if it be not so, we are directed unto the conduct of all extravagant imaginations in every one who will pretend unto spiritual experience. Attend unto these rules, and I will grant in prayer all the ways whereby the soul, or the faculties

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of it, can rationally act itself towards God in a holy and spiritual manner. But if you extend it unto such kind of actings as our nature is not capable of, at least in this world, it is the open fruit of a deceived fancy, and makes all that is tendered from the same hand to be justly suspected. And such is that instance of this prayer, that it is *in the will and its affections without any actings of the mind or understanding;* for although I grant that the adhesion of the will and affections unto God by love, delight, complacency, rest and satisfaction, in prayer, belongs to the improvement of this duty, yet to imagine that they are not guided, directed, acted by the understanding, in the contemplation of God's goodness, beauty, grace, and other divine excellencies, is to render our worship and devotion brutish or irrational, whereas it is, and ought to be, our "reasonable service."

And that this very description here given us of prayer is a mere effect of fancy and imagination, and not that which the author of it was led unto by the conduct of spiritual light and experience, is evident from hence, that it is borrowed from those contemplative philosophers who, after the preaching of the gospel in the world, endeavoured to refine and advance heathenism into a compliance with it; at least is fancied in imitation of what they ascribe unto a perfect mind. One of them, and his expressions in one place, may suffice for an instance,—Plotinus, Ennead. vi., lib. 9, cap. 10; for after many other ascriptions unto a soul that hath attained union with the chiefest good, he adds:—*Οὐ γάρ τι ἐκινεῖτο παρ' αὐτῷ, οὐ θυμὸς, οὐκ ἐπιθυμία ἄλλου παρῆν αὐτῷ, ἀναζεζηκότι· ἀλλ' οὐ δὲ λόγος, οὐ δέ τις νόησις· οὐ δ' ὅλως αὐτὸς, εἰ δεῖ καὶ τοῦτο λέγειν· ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἀρπασθεὶς ἢ ἐνθουσιάσας ἡσυχῇ ἐν ἐρήμῳ κατασταθεὶς γεγένηται ἀτρεμεῖ, τῇ αὐτοῦ οὐσίᾳ οὐδαμοῦ ἀποκλίνων, οὐδὲ περὶ αὐτὸν στρεφόμενος, ἐστὼς πάντη καὶ οἷον στάσις γενόμενος*·—"A mind thus risen up is no way moved, no anger, no desire of any thing is in it" (a perfect rest of the affections); "nay, neither reason nor understanding" (are acted), "nor, if I may say so, itself: but being ecstasied and filled with God, it comes into a quiet, still, immovable repose and state, no way declining" (by any sensible actings) "from its own essence, nor exercising any reflex act upon itself, is wholly at rest, as having attained a perfect state;"—or to this purpose, with much more to the same. And as it is easy to find the substance of our author's notion in these words, so the reader may see it more at large declared in that last chapter of his Enneads; and all his companions in design about that time speak to the same purpose.

2. The spiritual *intense fixation of the mind*, by contemplation on God in Christ, until the soul be as it were swallowed up in admiration and delight, and being brought unto an utter loss, through the infiniteness of those excellencies which it doth admire and adore, it

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returns again into its own abasements, out of a sense of its infinite distance from what it would absolutely and eternally embrace, and, withal, the inexpressible rest and satisfaction which the will and affections receive in their approaches unto the eternal Fountain of goodness, are things to be aimed at in prayer, and which, through the riches of divine condescension, are frequently enjoyed. The soul is hereby raised and ravished, not into ecstasies or unaccountable raptures, not acted into motions above the power of its own understanding and will; but in all the faculties and affections of it, through the effectual workings of the Spirit of grace and the lively impressions of divine love, with intimations of the relations and kindness of God, is filled with rest, in "joy unspeakable and full of glory." And these spiritual acts of communion with God, whereof I may say with Bernard, *Rara hora, brevis mora,* may be enjoyed in mental or vocal prayer indifferently. But as the description here given of mental, spiritual prayer hath no countenance given it from the Scriptures, yea, those things are spoken of it which are expressly contrary thereunto, as perfect purity and the like, and as it cannot be confirmed by the rational experience of any, so it no way takes off from the necessity and usefulness of vocal prayer, whereunto it is opposed; for still the use of words is necessary in this duty, from the nature of the duty itself, the command of God, and the edification of the church. And it is fallen out unhappily, as to the exaltation of the conceived excellency of this mental prayer, that our Lord Jesus Christ not only instructed his disciples to pray by the use of words, but did so himself, and that constantly, so far as we know, Matt. xxvi. 39, 42; yea, when he was most intense and engaged in this duty, instead of this pretended still prayer of contemplation, he prayed μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς, "with a strong outcry," Heb. v. 7, which, Ps. xxii. 1, is called the "voice of his roaring." And all the reproaches which this author casts on fervent, earnest, vocal prayer, —namely, that it is a tedious, loud, impetuous, and an uncivil conversation with God, a mere artificial slight and facility,—may with equal truth be cast on the outward manner of the praying of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was ofttimes long, sometimes loud and vehement. And unto the example of their Lord and Master we may add that of the prophets and apostles, who mention nothing of this pretended elevation, but constantly made use of and desired God to hear their "voices," their "cry," their "words," in their supplication, the words of many of them being accordingly recorded. Wherefore, words proper, suggested by the Spirit of God, and taken either directly or analogically out of the Scripture, do help the mind and enlarge it with supplications. "Interdum voce nos ipsos ad devotionem et acrius incitamus," August. Epist. cxxi. ad Probam.

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The use of such words, being first led unto by the desires of the mind, may and doth lead the mind on to express its farther desires also, and increaseth those which are so expressed. It is from God's institution and blessing that the mind and will of praying do lead unto the words of prayer, and the words of prayer do lead on the mind and will, enlarging them in desires and supplications. And without this aid many would oftentimes be straitened in acting their thoughts and affections towards God, or distracted in them, or diverted from them. And we have experience that an obedient, sanctified persistency in the use of gracious words in prayer hath prevailed against violent temptations and injections of Satan, which the mind in its silent contemplations was not able to grapple with. And holy affections are thus also excited hereby. The very words and expressions which the mind chooseth to declare its thoughts, conceptions, and desires about heavenly things, do reflect upon the affections, increasing and exciting of them. Not only the things themselves fixed on do affect the heart, but the words of wisdom and sobriety whereby they are expressed do so also. There is a recoiling of efficacy, if I may so speak, in deep impressions on the affections, from the words that are made use of to express those affections by. But we treat of prayer principally as it is to be performed in families, societies, assemblies, congregations, where this mental prayer would do well to promote the edification which is attainable in the silent meetings of the Quakers.

And because this kind of prayer, as it is called, is not only recommended unto us, but preferred before all other ways and methods of prayer, and chosen as an instance to set off the devotion of the church of Rome, to invite others thereunto, I shall a little more particularly inquire into it. And I must needs say, that, on the best view I can take, or examination of it, it seems to be a matter altogether useless, uncertain, an effect of and entertainment for vain curiosity, whereby men "intrude themselves into those things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their own fleshly mind;" for, not to call over what was before intimated in things that are practical in religion, no man can understand any thing whereof he can have no experience. Nothing is rejected by virtue of this rule whereof some men, through their own default, have no experience; but every thing is so justly, whereof no man in the discharge of his duty can attain any experience. He that speaks of such things unto others, if any such there might be belonging unto our condition in this world, must needs be a barbarian unto them in what he speaks. And whereas also he speaks of that wherein his own reason and understanding have no interest, he must be so also unto himself; for no man can by the use of reason, however advanced by spiritual

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light, understand such actings of the souls of other men or his own as wherein there is no exercise of reason or understanding, such as these raptures are pretended to consist in. So whereas one of them says, "Fundus animæ meæ tangit fundum essentiæ Dei," it had certainly been better for him to have kept his apprehensions or fancy to himself, than to express himself in words which in their own proper sense are blasphemous, and whose best defensative is that they are unintelligible. And if it be not unlawful, it is doubtless inexpedient, for any one, in things of religion, to utter what it is impossible for any body else to understand, with this only plea, that they do not indeed understand it themselves, it being what they enjoyed without any acts or actings of their own understanding. To allow such pretences is the ready way to introduce Babel into the church, and expose religion to scorn. Some pretending unto such raptures among ourselves I have known; wherein for a while they stirred up the admiration of weak and credulous persons; but through a little observation of what they did, spake, and pretended unto, with an examination of all by the unerring rule, they quickly came into contempt. All I intend at present is, that whatever be in this pretence, it is altogether useless unto edification, and therefore ought the declaration of it to be of no regard in the church of God. If the apostle would not allow the use of words, though miraculously suggested unto them that used them, without an immediate interpretation of their signification, what would he have said of such words and things as are capable of no interpretation, so as that any man living should understand them? for those by whom at present they are so extolled and commended unto us do themselves discourse at random, as blind men talk of colours, for they pretend not to have any experience of these things themselves. And it is somewhat an uncouth way of procedure to enhance the value of the communion of their church, and to invite others unto it, by declaring that there are some amongst them who enjoyed such spiritual ecstasies as could neither by themselves nor any others be understood; for nothing can be so wherein or whereabout there is no exercise of reason or understanding. Wherefore, the old question, *cui bono?* will discharge this pretence from being of any value or esteem in religion with considerate men.

Again; as the whole of this kind of prayer is useless as to the benefit and edification of the church or any member of it, so it is impossible there should ever be any certainty about the raptures wherein it is pretended to consist, but they must everlastingly be the subject of contention and dispute; for who shall assure me that the persons pretending unto these duties or enjoyments are not mere pretenders? Any man that lives, if he have a mind unto it, may say

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such things, or use such expressions concerning himself. If a man, indeed, shall pretend and declare that he doth or enjoyeth such things as are expressed in the word of God as the duty or privilege of any, and thereon are acknowledged by all to be things in themselves true and real, and likewise attainable by believers, he is ordinarily, so far as I know, to be believed in his profession, unless he can be convicted of falsehood by any thing inconsistent with such duties or enjoyments. Nor do I know of any great evil in our credulity herein, should we happen to be deceived in or by the person so professing, seeing he speaks of no more than all acknowledge it their duty to endeavour after. But when any one shall pretend unto spiritual actings or enjoyments which are neither prescribed nor promised in the Scripture, nor are investigable in the light of reason, no man is upon this mere profession obliged to give credit thereunto;—nor can any man tell what evil effects or consequences his so doing may produce; for when men are once taken off from that sure ground of Scripture and their own understandings, putting themselves afloat on the uncertain waters of fancies or conjectures, they know not how they may be tossed, nor whither they may be driven. If it shall be said that the holiness and honesty of the persons by whom these especial privileges are enjoyed are sufficient reason why we should believe them in what they profess, I answer, they would be so in a good measure if they did not pretend unto things repugnant unto reason and unwarranted by the Scripture, which is sufficient to crush the reputation of any man's integrity; nor can their holiness and honesty be proved to be such as to render them absolutely impregnable against all temptations, which was the pre-eminence of Christ alone. Neither is there any more strength in this plea but what may be reduced unto this assertion, that there neither are nor ever were any hypocrites in the world undiscoverable unto the eyes of men; for if such there may be, some of these pretenders may be of their number, notwithstanding the appearance of their holiness and honesty. Besides, if the holiness of the best of them were examined by evangelical light and rule, perhaps it would be so far from being a sufficient countenance unto other things as that it would not be able to defend its own reputation. Neither is it want of charity which makes men doubtful and unbelieving in such cases, but godly jealousy and Christian prudence, which require them to take care that they be not deceived or deluded, do not only warrant them to abide on that guard, but make it their necessary duty also; for it is no new thing that pretences of raptures, ecstasies, revelations, and unaccountable, extraordinary enjoyments of God, should be made use of unto corrupt ends, yea, abused to the worst imaginable. The experience of the church, both under the Old Testament and the New,

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witnesseth hereunto, as the apostle Peter declares, 2 Pet. ii. 1: for among them of old there were multitudes of false pretenders unto visions, dreams, revelations, and such spiritual ecstasies, some of whom wore a "rough garment to deceive;" which went not alone, but [was] accompanied with all such appearing austerities as might beget an opinion of sanctity and integrity in them. And when the body of the people were grown corrupt and superstitious, this sort of men had credit with them above the true prophets of God; yet did they for the most part show themselves to be hypocritical liars. And we are abundantly warned of such spirits under the New Testament, as we are foretold that such there would be, by whom many should be deluded; and all such pretenders unto extraordinary intercourse with God we are commanded to try by the unerring rule of the word, and desire only liberty so to do.

But suppose that those who assert these devotions and enjoyments of God in their own experience are not false pretenders unto what they profess, nor design to deceive, but are persuaded in their own minds of the reality of what they endeavour to declare, yet neither will this give us the least security of their truth; for it is known that there are so many ways, partly natural, partly diabolical, whereby the fancies and imaginations of persons may be so possessed with false images and apprehensions of things, and that with so vehement an efficacy as to give them a confidence of their truth and reality, that no assurance of them can be given by a persuasion of the sincerity of them by whom they are pretended. And there are so many ways whereby men are disposed unto such a frame and actings, or are disposed to be imposed on by such delusions, especially where they are prompted by superstition, and are encouraged doctrinally to an expectation of such imaginations, that it is a far greater wonder that more have not fallen into the same extravagancies than that any have so done. We find by experience that some have had their imaginations so fixed on things evil and noxious by satanical delusions, that they have confessed against themselves things and crimes that have rendered them obnoxious unto capital punishments, whereof they were never really and actually guilty. Wherefore, seeing these acts or duties of devotion are pretended to be such as wherein there is no sensible actuation of the mind or understanding, and so cannot rationally be accounted for, nor rendered perceptible unto the understanding of others, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they are only fond imaginations of deluded fancies, which superstitious, credulous persons have gradually raised themselves unto, or such as they have exposed themselves to be imposed on withal by Satan, through a groundless, unwarrantable desire after them or expectation of them.

But whatever there may be in the height of this "contemplative

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prayer," as it is called, it neither is prayer nor can on any account be so esteemed. That we allow of mental prayer, and all actings of the mind in holy meditations, was before declared. Nor do we deny the usefulness or necessity of those other things, of mortifying the affections and passions, of an entire resignation of the whole soul unto God, with complacency in him, so far as our nature is capable of them in this world. But it is that incomparable excellency of it in the silence of the soul, and the pure adhesion of the will, without any actings of the understanding, that we inquire into. And I say, whatever else there may be herein, yet it hath not the nature of prayer, nor is to be so esteemed, though under that name and notion it be recommended unto us. Prayer is a natural duty, the notion and understanding whereof is common unto all mankind; and the concurrent voice of nature deceiveth not. Whatever, therefore, is not compliant therewith, at least what is contradictory unto it or inconsistent with it, is not to be esteemed prayer. Now, in the common sense of mankind, this duty is that acting of the mind and soul wherein, from an acknowledgment of the sovereign being, self-sufficiency, rule, and dominion of God, with his infinite goodness, wisdom, power, righteousness, and omniscience and omnipresence, with a sense of their own universal dependence on him, his will and pleasure, as to their beings, lives, happiness, and all their concernments, they address their desires with faith and trust unto him, according as their state and condition doth require, or ascribe praise and glory unto him for what he is in himself and what he is to them. This is the general notion of prayer, which the reason of mankind centres in; neither can any man conceive of it under any other notion whatever. The gospel directs the performance of this duty in an acceptable manner with respect unto the mediation of Christ, the aids of the Holy Ghost, and the revelation of the spiritual mercies we all do desire; but it changeth nothing in the general nature of it. It doth not introduce a duty of another kind, and call it by the name of that which is known in the light of nature but is quite another thing. But this general nature of prayer all men universally understand well enough in whom the first innate principles of natural light are not extinguished or wofully depraved. This may be done among some by a long traditional course of an atheistical and brutish conversation. But as large and extensive as are the convictions of men concerning the being and existence of God, so are their apprehensions of the nature of this duty; for the first actings of nature towards a Divine Being are in invocation. Jonah's mariners knew every one how to call on his god, when they were in a storm. And where there is not trust or affiance in God acted, whereby men glorify him as God, and where desires or praises are not offered unto him,—neither

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of which can be without express acts of the mind or understanding, —there is no prayer, whatever else there may be. Wherefore, this contemplative devotion, wherein, as it is pretended, the soul is ecstasied into an advance of the will and affections above all the actings of the mind or understanding, hath no one property of prayer, as the nature of it is manifest in the light of nature and common agreement of mankind. Prayer without an actual acknowledgment of God in all his holy excellencies, and the actings of faith in fear, love, confidence, and gratitude, is a monster in nature, or a by-blow of imagination, which hath no existence in *rerum natura*. These persons, therefore, had best find out some other name wherewith to impose this kind of devotion upon our admiration, for from the whole precincts of prayer or invocation on the name of God it is utterly excluded; and what place it may have in any other part of the worship of God, we shall immediately inquire.

But this examination of it by the light of nature will be looked on as most absurd and impertinent: for if we must try all matters of spiritual communion with God, and that in those things which wholly depend on divine, supernatural revelation, by this rule and standard, our measures of them will be false and perverse; and, I say, no doubt they would. Wherefore, we call only that concern of it unto a trial hereby whose true notion is confessedly fixed in the light of nature. Without extending that line beyond its due bounds, we may by it take a just measure of what is prayer and what is not; for therein it cannot deceive nor be deceived. And this is all which at present we engage about. And in the pursuit of the same inquiry we may bring it also unto the Scripture, from which we shall find it as foreign as from the light of nature; for as it is described, so far as any thing intelligible may be from thence collected, it exceeds or deviates from whatever is said in the Scripture concerning prayer, even in those places where the grace and privileges of it are most emphatically expressed, and as it is exemplified in the prayers of the Lord Christ himself and all the saints recorded therein. Wherefore, the light of nature and the Scripture do by common consent exclude it from being prayer in any kind. Prayer, in the Scripture representation of it, is the soul's access and approach unto God by Jesus Christ, through the aids of his Holy Spirit, to make known its requests unto him, with supplication and thanksgiving. And that whereon it is recommended unto us are its external adjuncts, and its internal grace and efficacy. Of the first sort, earnestness, fervency, importunity, constancy, and perseverance, are the principal. No man can attend unto these, or any of them, in a way of duty, but in the exercise of his mind and understanding. Without this, whatever looks like any of them is brutish fury or obstinacy.

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And as unto the internal form of it, in that description which is given us of its nature in the Scripture, it consists in the especial exercise of faith, love, delight, fear, all the graces of the Spirit, as occasion doth require. And in that exercise of these graces, wherein the life and being of prayer doth consist, a continual regard is to be had unto the mediation of Christ and the free promises of God; through which means he exhibits himself unto us as a God hearing prayer. These things are both plainly and frequently mentioned in the Scripture, as they are all of them exemplified in the prayers of those holy persons which are recorded therein. But for this contemplative prayer, as it is described by our author and others, there is neither precept for it, nor direction about it, nor motive unto it, nor example of it, in the whole Scripture. And it cannot but seem marvellous, to some at least, that whereas this duty and all its concernments are more insisted on therein than any other Christian duty or privilege whatever, the height and excellency of it,—and that in comparison whereof all other kinds of prayer, all the actings of the mind and soul in them, are decried,—should not obtain the least intimation therein.

For if we should take a view of all the particular places wherein the nature and excellency of this duty are described, with the grace and privilege wherewith it is accompanied,—such as, for instance, Eph. vi. 18, Phil. iv. 6, Heb. iv. 16, x. 19–22,—there is nothing that is consistent with this contemplative prayer. Neither is there in the prayers of our Lord Jesus Christ, nor of his apostles, nor of any holy men from the beginning of the world, either for themselves or the whole church, any thing that gives the least countenance unto it. Nor can any man declare what is or can be the work of the Holy Spirit therein, as he is a Spirit of grace and supplication, nor is any gift of his mentioned in the Scripture capable of the least exercise therein; so that in no sense can it be that "praying in the Holy Ghost" which is prescribed unto us. There is, therefore, no example proposed unto our imitation, no mark set before us, nor any direction given, for the attaining of this pretended excellency and perfection. Whatever is fancied or spoken concerning it, it is utterly foreign to the Scripture, and must owe itself unto the deluded imagination of some few persons.

Besides, the Scripture doth not propose unto us any other kind of access unto God under the New Testament, nor any nearer approaches unto him, than what we have in and through the mediation of Christ, and by faith in him. But in this pretence there seems to be such an immediate enjoyment of God in his essence aimed at as is regardless of Christ, and leaves him quite behind. But God will not be all in all immediately unto the church, until the Lord Christ hath fully

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delivered up the mediatory kingdom unto him. And, indeed, the silence concerning Christ in the whole of what is ascribed unto this contemplative prayer, or rather the exclusion of him from any concernment in it as mediator, is sufficient with all considerate persons to evince that it hath not the least interest in the duty of prayer, name or thing.

Neither doth this imagination belong any more unto any other part or exercise of faith in this world; and yet here we universally walk by faith, and not by sight. The whole of what belongs unto it may be reduced unto the two heads of what we do towards God, and what we do enjoy of him therein. And as to the first, all the actings of our souls towards God belong unto our "reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1; more is not required of us in a way of duty. But that is no part of our reasonable service wherein our minds and understandings have no concernment. Nor is it any part of our enjoyment of God in this life; for no such thing is anywhere promised unto us, and it is by the promises alone that we are made partakers of the divine nature, or have any thing from God communicated unto us. There seems, therefore, to be nothing in the bravery of these affected expressions, but an endeavour to fancy somewhat above the measure of all possible attainments in this life, falling unspeakably beneath those of future glory. A kind of purgatory it is in devotion,—somewhat out of this world and not in another, above the earth and beneath heaven, where we may leave it in clouds and darkness.

CHAPTER XI.

Prescribed forms of prayer examined.

THERE are also great pleas for the use of *prescribed limited forms of prayer*, in opposition to that spiritual ability in prayer which we have described and proved to be a gift of the Holy Ghost. Where these *forms* are contended for by men with respect unto *their own use and practice only*, as suitable to their experience, and judged by them a serving of God with the best that they have, I shall not take the least notice of them, nor of any dissent about them; but whereas a persuasion not only of their lawfulness but of their *necessity* is made use of unto other ends and purposes, wherein the peace and edification of believers are highly concerned, it is necessary we should make some inquiry thereinto. I say, it is only with respect unto such a sense of their *nature* and *necessity* of their use as gives occasion or a supposed advantage unto men to oppose, deny, and speak evil of that way of prayer, with its causes and ends, which

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we have described, that I shall any way ... are, nor *prayer*, and their use: for I know well en... ers, as to do to judge or condemn the persons or... com- of religious worship as they choose for t... but ceptance in, unless they are expressly i... such cases, or the like, which are plain... or Scripture revelation, it is a silly appre... atheism, that God doth not require of all men ... actings towards him according to that sovereign light wh... erected in their own minds.

What the *forms* intended are, how composed, how used, how in some cases *imposed*, are things so known to all that we shall not need to speak to them. *Prayer is God's institution*, and the reading of these *forms* is that which men have made and set up in the likeness thereof, or in compliance with it; for it is said that "the Lord Christ having provided the *matter of prayer*, and commanded us to pray, it is left unto us or others to *compose prayer*, as unto the manner of it, as we or they shall see cause." But besides that there is no appearance of truth in the inference, the direct contrary rather ensuing on the proposition laid down, it is built on the supposition that besides the provision of matter of prayer and the command of the duty, the Lord Christ hath not moreover promised, doth not communicate unto his church, such spiritual aids and assistances as shall enable them, without any other outward pretended helps, to pray according unto the mind of God; which we must not admit if we intend to be Christians. In like manner, he hath provided the whole subject-matter of preaching, and commanded all his ministers to preach; but it doth not hence follow that they may all or any of them make one sermon, to be constantly read in all assemblies of Christians without any variation, unless we shall grant also that he ceaseth to give gifts unto men for the work of the ministry. Our inquiry, therefore, will be, what place or use they may have therein, or in our duty as performed by virtue thereof; which may be expressed in the ensuing observations:—

1. The Holy Ghost, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, is nowhere, that I know of, promised unto any to help or assist them in *composing prayers* for others; and therefore we have no ground to *pray for him* or his assistance unto that end in particular, nor foundation to build faith or expectation of receiving him upon. Wherefore, he is not in any especial or gracious manner concerned in that work or endeavour. Whether this be a duty that falls under his care as communicating gifts in general for the edification of the church shall be afterward examined. That which we plead at present is, that he is nowhere peculiarly promised for that end, nor

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delivere either command or direction to ask for his assistance there-
silenc If any shall say that he is promised to this purpose where he
cont o as a Spirit of grace and supplication, I answer, besides what
ce ath been already pleaded at large in the explication and vindication of the proper sense of that promise, that he is promised directly to them that are to pray, and not to them that make prayers for others, which themselves will not say is praying. But supposing it a duty in general so to compose prayers for our own use or the use of others, it is lawful and warrantable to pray for the aid and guidance of the Holy Ghost therein, not as unto his peculiar assistance in prayer, not as he is unto believers a Spirit of supplication, but as he is our sanctifier, the author and efficient cause of every gracious work and duty in us.

It may be the prayers composed by some holy men under the Old Testament, by the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, for the use of the church, will be also pretended. But as the inspiration or assistance which they had in their work was a thing quite of another kind than any thing that is ordinarily promised, or that any persons can now pretend unto, so whether they were dictated unto them by the Holy Ghost to be used afterward by others as mere forms of prayer, may be yet farther inquired into.

The great plea for some of these external aids of prayer is by this one consideration utterly removed out of the way. It is said that "some of these prayers were prepared by great and holy men, martyrs, it may be, some of them, for the truth of the gospel and testimony of Jesus;" and, indeed, had any men in the world a promise of especial assistance by the Spirit of God in such a work, I should not contend but the persons intended were as likely to partake of that assistance as any others in these latter ages. Extraordinary, supernatural inspiration they had not; and the holy apostles, who were always under the influence and conduct of it, never made use of it unto any such purpose as to prescribe forms of prayer, either for the whole church or single persons. Whereas, therefore, there is no such especial promise given unto any, this work of composing prayers is foreign unto the duty of prayer, as unto any interest in the gracious assistance which is promised thereunto, however it may be a common duty, and fall under the help and blessing of God in general. So some men, from their acquaintance with the matter of prayer above others, which they attain by spiritual light, knowledge, and experience, and their comprehension of the arguments which the Scripture directs unto to be used and pleaded in our supplications, may set down and express a prayer,—that is, the matter and outward form of it,—that shall declare the substance of things to be prayed for, much more accommodate to the conditions, wants, and desires of Christians

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than others can who are not so clearly enlightened as they are, nor have had the experience which they have had. For those prayers, as they are called, which men without such light and experience compose of phrases and expressions gathered up from others, taken out of the Scripture, or invented by themselves, and cast into a contexture and method such as they suppose suited unto prayer in general, be they never so well worded, so quaint and elegant in expression, are so empty and jejune as that they can be of no manner of use unto any, unless to keep them from praying whilst they live; and of such we have books good store filled withal, easy enough to be composed by such as never in their lives prayed according to the mind of God. From the former sort much may be learned, as they doctrinally exhibit the matter and arguments of prayer; but the composition of them for others, to be used as their prayers, is that which no man hath any promise of peculiar spiritual assistance in, with respect unto prayer in particular.

2. No man hath any *promise of the Spirit* of grace and supplication to enable him to *compose a form or forms of prayer for himself.* The Spirit of God helps us to pray, not to make prayers in that sense. Suppose men, as before, in so doing may have his assistance in general, as in other studies and endeavours, yet they have not that especial assistance which he gives as a Spirit of grace and supplication, enabling us to cry, "Abba, Father;" for men do not compose forms of prayer, however they may use them, by the immediate actings of faith, love, and delight in God, with those other graces which he excites and acts in those supplications which are according to the divine will. Nor is God the immediate object of the actings of the faculties of the souls of men in such a work. Their inventions, memories, judgments, are immediately exercised about their present composition, and there they rest. Wherefore, whereas the exercise of grace immediately on God in Christ, under the formal notion of prayer, is no part of men's work or design when they compose and set down forms for themselves or others, if any so do they are not under a promise of especial assistance therein in the manner before declared.

3. As there is no assistance promised unto the composition of such forms, so it is *no institution* of the law or gospel. Prayer itself is a duty of the *law of nature,* and being of such singular and indispensable use unto all persons, the commands for it are reiterated in the Scripture beyond those concerning any other particular duty whatever; and if it hath respect unto Jesus Christ, with sundry ordinances of the gospel to be performed in his name, it falls under a new divine institution. Hereon are commands given us to pray, to pray continually without ceasing, to pray and faint not, to pray for our-

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selves, to pray for one another, in our closets, in our families, in the assemblies of the church; but as for this work of making or composing forms of prayers for ourselves, to be used as prayers, there is no command, no institution, no mention in the scriptures of the Old Testament or the New. It is a work of human extract and original, nor can any thing be expected from it but what proceeds from that fountain. A blessing possibly there may be upon it, but not such as issueth from the especial assistance of the Spirit of God in it, nor from any divine appointment or institution whatever. But the reader must observe that I do not urge these things to prove forms of prayer unlawful to be used, but only at present declare their nature and original, with respect unto that work of the Holy Spirit which we have described.

4. This being *the original* of forms of prayer, the *benefit* and *advantage* which is in their use, which alone is pleadable in their behalf, comes next under consideration. And this may be done with respect unto two sorts of persons:—(1.) Such as have the *gift* or *ability* of *free prayer* bestowed on them, or however have attained it. (2.) Such as are *mean and low in this ability*, and therefore incompetent to perform this duty without that aid and assistance of them. And unto both sorts they are pleaded to be of use and advantage.

(1.) It is pleaded that there is so much good and so much advantage in the use of them *that it is expedient that those who can pray otherwise unto their own and others' edification yet ought sometimes to use them.* What this benefit is hath not been distinctly declared, nor do I know nor can I divine wherein it should consist. Sacred things are not to be used merely to show our liberty. And there seems to be herein a neglect of stirring up the gift, if not also the grace of God, in those who have received them. "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal;" and to forego its exercise on any just occasion seems not warrantable. We are bound at all times, in the worship of God, to serve him with the best that we have; and if we have a male in the flock, and do sacrifice that which, in comparison thereof, is a corrupt thing, we are deceivers. Free prayer, unto them who have an ability for it, is more suited to the nature of the duty in the light of nature itself, and to Scripture commands and examples, than the use of any prescribed forms. To omit, therefore, the exercise of a spiritual ability therein, and voluntarily to divert unto the other relief,—which yet, in that case at least, is no relief,—doth not readily present its advantage unto a sober consideration. And the reader may observe that at present I examine not what men or churches may agree upon by common consent, as judging and avowing it best for their own edification, which is a matter

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of another consideration, but only of the duty of believers as such in their respective stations and conditions.

(2.) It is generally supposed that the use of such forms is of singular advantage unto them that are *low and mean in their ability to pray of themselves.* I propose it thus because I cannot grant that any [man] who sincerely believeth that there is a God, [and who] is sensible of his own wants and his absolute dependence upon him, is utterly unable to make requests unto him for relief without any help but what is suggested unto him by the working of the natural faculties of his own soul. What men will wilfully neglect is one thing, and what they cannot do, if they seriously apply themselves unto their duty, is another. Neither do I believe that [there is] any man who is so far instructed in the knowledge of Christ by the gospel as that he can make use of a composed prayer with understanding, but also that in some measure he is able to call upon God in the name of Christ, with respect unto what he feels in himself and is concerned in; and farther no man's prayers are to be extended. I speak, therefore, of those who have the least measure and lowest degree of this ability, seeing none are absolutely uninterested therein. Unto this sort of persons I know not of what use these forms are, unless it be to keep them low and mean all the days of their lives; for whereas, both in the state of nature and the state of grace, in one whereof every man is supposed to be, there are certain heavenly sparks suited unto each condition, the main duty of all men is to stir them up and increase them. Even in the remainders of lapsed nature there are "cœlestes igniculi," in notices of good and evil, accusations and apologies of conscience. These none will deny but that they ought to be stirred up and increased; which can be no otherwise done but in their sedulous exercise. Nor is there any such effectual way of their exercise as in the soul's application of itself unto God with respect unto them; which is done in prayer only. But as for those whom in this matter we principally regard,—that is, professed believers in Jesus Christ,—there is none of them but have such principles of spiritual life, and therein of all obedience unto God and communion with him, as, being improved and exercised under those continual supplies of the Spirit which they receive from Christ their head, will enable them to discharge every duty that in every condition or relation is required of them in an acceptable manner. Among these is that of an ability for prayer; and to deny them to have it, supposing them true believers, is expressly to contradict the apostle affirming that "because we are sons, God sendeth forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." But this ability, as I have showed, is no way to be improved but in and by a constant exercise. Now, whether the use of the forms inquired into, which certainly

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taketh men off from the exercise of what ability they have, doth not tend directly to keep them still low and mean in their abilities, is not hard to determine.

"But suppose those spoken of are not yet real believers, but only such as profess the gospel, not yet sincerely converted unto God, whose duty also it is to pray on all occasions; these have no such principle or ability to improve, and therefore this advantage is not by them to be neglected." I answer, that the matter of all spiritual gifts is spiritual light; according, therefore, to their measure in the light of the knowledge of the gospel, such is their measure in spiritual gifts also. If they have no spiritual light, no insight into the knowledge of the gospel, prayers framed and composed according unto it will be of little use unto them. If they have any such light, it ought to be improved by exercise in this duty, which is of such indispensable necessity unto their souls.

5. But yet the advantage which all sorts of persons may have hereby, in having "the *matter of prayer* prepared for them and suggested unto them," is also insisted on. "This they may be much to seek in who yet have *sincere desires to pray*, and whose *affections* will comply with what is proposed unto them." And this, indeed, would carry a great appearance of reason with it, but that there are other ways appointed of God unto this end, and which are sufficient thereunto, under the guidance, conduct, and assistance of the blessed Spirit, whose work must be admitted in all parts of this duty, unless we intend to frame prayers that shall be an abomination to the Lord. Such are, men's diligent and sedulous consideration of themselves, their spiritual state and condition, their wants and desires; a diligent consideration of the Scripture, or the doctrine of it in the ministry of the word, whereby they will be both instructed in the whole matter of prayer and convinced of their own concernment therein; with all other helps of coming to the knowledge of God and themselves; all which they are to attend unto who intend to pray in a due manner. To furnish men with prayers to be said by them, and so to satisfy their consciences, whilst they live in the neglect of these things, is to deceive them, and not to help or instruct them; and if they do conscientiously attend unto these things, they will have no need of those other pretended helps. For men to live and converse with the world, not once inquiring into their own ways, or reflecting on their own hearts (unless under some charge of conscience, accompanied with fear or danger); never endeavouring to examine, try, or compare their state and condition with the Scripture, nor scarce considering either their own wants or God's promises; to have a book lie ready for them wherein they may read a prayer, and so suppose they have discharged their duty in that matter; is a course which

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surely they ought not to be countenanced or encouraged in. Nor is the perpetual rotation of the same words and expressions suited to instruct or carry on men in the knowledge of any thing, but rather to divert the mind from the due consideration of the things intended; and, therefore, commonly issues in formality. And where men have words or expressions prepared for them and suggested unto them that really signify the things wherein they are concerned, yet if the light and knowledge of those principles of truth whence they are derived, and whereinto they are resolved, be not in some measure fixed and abiding in their minds, they cannot be much benefited or edified by their repetition.

6. *Experience* is pleaded in the same case; and this with me, where persons are evidently conscientious, is of more moment than a hundred notional arguments that cannot be brought to that trial. Some, therefore, say that they have had spiritual advantage, the exercise of grace, and holy intercourse with God, in the use of such forms, and have their affections warmed and their hearts much bettered thereby;—and this they take to be a clear evidence and token that they are not disapproved of God; yea, that they are a great advantage, at least unto many, in prayer. *Ans.* Whether they are approved or disapproved of God, whether they are lawful or unlawful, we do not consider; but only whether they are for spiritual benefit and advantage, for the good of our own souls and the edification of others, as set up in competition with the exercise of the gift before described. And herein I am very unwilling to oppose the experience of any one who seems to be under the conduct of the least beam of gospel light; only, I shall desire to propose some few things to their consideration: as,—

(1.) Whether they understand aright the difference that is between *natural devotion* occasionally excited, and the due actings of *evangelical faith* and *love*, with other graces of the Spirit, in a way directed unto by divine appointment? All men who acknowledge a Deity or Divine Power which they adore, when they address themselves seriously to perform any religious worship thereunto in their own way, be it what it will, will have their affections moved and excited suitably unto the apprehensions they have of what they worship, yea, though in particular it have no existence but in their own imaginations; for these things ensue on the general notion of a Divine Power, and not on the application of them to such idols as indeed are nothing in the world. There will be in such persons dread, and reverence, and fear, as there was in some of the heathen, unto an unspeakable horror, when they entered into the temples and merely imaginary presence of their gods; the whole work being begun and finished in their fancies. And sometimes great joys, satisfactions,

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and delights, do ensue on what they do; for as what they so do is suited to the best light they have, and men are apt to have a complacency in their own inventions, as Micah had, Judges xvii. 13, and upon inveterate prejudices, which are the guides of most men in religion, their consciences find relief in the discharge of their duty. These things, I say, are found in persons of the highest and most dreadful superstitions in the world, yea, heightened unto inexpressible agitations of mind, in horror on the one side, and raptures or ecstasies on the other. And they are all tempered and qualified according to the mode and way of worship wherein men are engaged; but in themselves they are all of the same nature,—that is, natural, or effects and impressions upon nature. So it is with the Mohammedans, who excel in this devotion; and so it is with idolatrous Christians, who place the excellency and glory of their profession herein. Wherefore, such devotion, such affections, will be excited by religious offices, in all that are sincere in their use, whether they be of divine appointment or no. But the actings of faith and love on God through Christ, according to the gospel, or the tenor of the new covenant, with the effects produced thereby in the heart and affections, are things quite of another kind and nature; and unless men do know how really to distinguish between these things, it is to no purpose to plead spiritual benefit and advantage in the use of such forms, seeing possibly it may be no other but of the same kind with what all false worshippers in the world have, or may have, experience of.

(2.) Let them diligently inquire whether the effects on their hearts which they plead do not proceed from a *precedent preparation*, a good design and upright ends, occasionally excited. Let it be supposed that those who thus make use of and plead for forms of prayer, especially in public, do in a due manner prepare themselves for it by holy meditation, with an endeavour to bring their souls into a holy frame of fear, delight, and reverence of God; let it also be supposed that they have a good end and design in the worship they address themselves unto, namely, the glory of God and their own spiritual advantage;—the prayers themselves, though they should be in some things irregular, may give occasion to exercise those acts of grace which they were otherwise prepared for. And I say yet farther,—

(3.) That whilst these forms of prayer are clothed with the general *notions of prayer*,—that is, are esteemed as such in the minds of them that use them; are accompanied in their use with the motives and ends of prayer; express no matter unlawful to be insisted on in prayer; directing the souls of men to none but lawful objects of divine worship and prayer, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and whilst men make use of them with the true design of prayer, looking after due assistance unto prayer;—I do not judge there is any such evil in them

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as that God will not communicate his Spirit to any in the use of them, so as that they should have no holy communion with him in and under them. Much less will I say that God never therein regards their persons, or rejects their praying as unlawful; for the persons and duties of men may be accepted with God when they walk and act in sincerity according to their light, though in many things, and those of no small importance, sundry irregularities are found both in what they do and in the manner of doing it. Where persons walk before God in their integrity, and practise nothing contrary to their light and conviction in his worship, God is merciful unto them, although they order not every thing according to the rule and measure of the word. So was it with them who came to the passover in the days of Hezekiah; they had not cleansed themselves, but did "eat the passover otherwise than it was written," 2 Chron. xxx. 18: for whom the good king made the solemn prayer suited to their occasion, "The good LORD pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. And the LORD hearkened unto Hezekiah, and healed the people," verses 18–20. Here was a duty for the substance of it appointed of God; but in the manner of its performance there was a failure,—they did it not according to what was written, which is the sole rule of all religious duties. This God was displeased withal, yet graciously passed by the offence, and accepted them whose hearts were upright in what they did. In the meantime, I do yet judge that the use of them is in itself obstructive of all the principal ends of prayer and sacred worship. Where they are alone used, they are opposite to the edification of the church; and where they are imposed to the absolute exclusion of other prayer, [they] are destructive of its liberty, and render a good part of the purchase of Christ of none effect.

Things being thus stated, it will be inquired whether the use of such forms of prayer is lawful or no. To this inquiry something shall be returned briefly in way of answer, and an end put unto this discourse. And I say,—

1. To *compose and write forms of prayer* to be *directive and doctrinal helps* unto others, as to the matter and method to be used in the right discharge of this duty, is lawful, and may in some cases be useful. It were better, it may be, if the same thing were done in another way, suited to give *direction* in the case, and not cast into the *form of a prayer*, which is apt to divert the mind from the due consideration of its proper end and use unto that which is not so; but this way of instruction is not to be looked on as unlawful merely for the form and method whereinto it is cast, whilst its true use only is attended unto.

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2. To *read, consider*, and *meditate* upon, such *written prayers*, as to the matter and arguments of prayer expressed in them, composed by persons from their own experience and the light of Scripture directions; or to make use of expressions set down in them, where the hearts of them that read them are really affected, because they find their state and condition, their wants and desires, declared in them, *is not unlawful*, but may be of good use unto some, though I must acknowledge I never heard any expressing any great benefit which they had received thereby,—but it is possible that some may so do: for no such freedom of prayer is asserted as should make it unlawful for men to make use of any proper means the better to enable them to pray, nor is any such ability of prayer granted as to supersede the duty of using means for the increase and furtherance of it.

3. To set up and prescribe the use of such forms *universally*, in opposition and unto the exclusion of *free prayer* by the aid of the Spirit of grace, is contrary not only to many divine precepts before insisted on, but to the light of nature itself, requiring every man to pray, and on some occasions necessitating them thereunto. But whatever be the practice of some men, I know not that any such opinion is pleaded for, and so shall not farther oppose it.

4. It is not inquired whether *forms of prayer*, especially as they may be designed unto and used for other ends, and not to be read instead of prayer, have in their composition any thing of *intrinsical evil* in them, for it is granted they have not; but the inquiry is, whether in their use *as prayers* they are not hinderances unto the right discharge of the duty of prayer according to the mind of God, and so may be unlawful in that respect: for I take it as granted that they are nowhere appointed of God for such a use, nowhere commanded so to be used; whence an argument may be formed against their having any interest in divine, acceptable worship, but it is not of our present consideration. For if on the accounts mentioned they appear not contrary unto, or inconsistent with, or are not used in a way exclusive of, that work of the Holy Spirit in prayer which we have described from the Scripture, nor are reducible unto any divine prohibition, whilst I may enjoy my own liberty I shall not contend with any about them. Nor shall I now engage into the examination of the arguments that are pleaded on their behalf, which some have greatly multiplied, as I suppose, not much to the advantage of their cause; for in things of religious practice, one testimony of Scripture rightly explained and applied, with the experience of believers thereon, is of more weight and value than a thousand dubious reasonings, which cannot be evidently resolved into those principles. Wherefore some few additional considerations shall put an issue unto this discourse.

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1. Some observe that there are forms of prayer composed and prescribed to be used both in the Old Testament and the New. Such, they say, was the form of blessing prescribed unto the priests on solemn occasions, Num. vi. 22–26, and the Psalms of David, as also the Lord's Prayer in the New Testament. (1.) If this be so, it proves that forms of prayer are not intrinsically evil, which is granted, yet may the use of them be unnecessary. (2.) The argument will not hold, so far as it is usually extended at least: "God himself hath prescribed some forms of prayer, to be used by some persons on some occasions; therefore, men may invent, yea, and prescribe those that shall be for common and constant use." He who forbade all images, or all use of them, in sacred things, appointed the making of the cherubims in the tabernacle and temple. (3.) The argument from the practice in use under the Old Testament in this matter, if any could thence be taken, when the people were carnal and tied up unto carnal ordinances, unto the duty and practice of believers under the New Testament and a more plentiful effusion of the Spirit, hath been before disproved. (4.) The words prescribed unto the priests were not a prayer properly, but an authoritative benediction, and an instituted sign of God's blessing the people; for so it is added in the explication of that ordinance, "They shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them," verse 27. (5.) David's Psalms were given out by immediate inspiration, and were most of them mystical and prophetical, appointed to be used in the church, as all other Scriptures, only some of them in a certain manner, namely, of singing, and that manner also was determined by divine appointment. (6.) That any form of prayer is appointed in the New Testament, to be used as a form, is neither granted nor can be proved. (7.) Give us prayers composed by divine inspiration, with a command for their use, with the time, manner, and form of their usage, which these instances prove to be lawful, if they prove any thing in this case, and there will be no contest about them. (8.) All and every one of the precedents or examples which we have in the whole Scripture of the prayers of any of the people of God, men or women, being all accommodated to their present occasions, and uttered in the freedom of their own spirits, do all give testimony unto free prayer, if not against the use of forms in that duty.

2. Moreover, it seems that "when any one prayeth, his prayer is a form unto all that join with him, whether in families or church-assemblies;" which some lay great weight upon, though I am not able to discern the force of it in this case: for,—(1.) The question is solely about him that prayeth, and his discharge of duty according to the mind of God, and not concerning them who join with him. (2.) The conjunction of others with him that prayeth according to his

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ability is an express command of God. (3.) Those who so join are at liberty, when it is their duty, to pray themselves. (4.) That which is not a form in itself is not a form to any; for there is more required to make it so than merely that the words and expressions are not of their own present invention. It is to them the benefit of a gift, bestowed for their edification in its present exercise, according to the mind of God. That only is a form of prayer unto any which he himself useth as a form; for its nature depends on its use. (5.) The argument is incogent: "God hath commanded some to pray according to the ability they have received, and others to join with them therein; therefore, it is lawful to invent forms of prayer for ourselves or others, to be used as prayers by them or us."

3. That which those who pretend unto moderation in this matter plead is, that "prayer itself is a commanded duty; but praying by or with a prescribed form is only an outward manner and circumstance of it, which is indifferent, and may or may not be used, as we see occasion;"—and might a general rule to this purpose be duly established, it would be of huge importance. But, (1.) It is an easy thing to invent and prescribe such outward forms and manner of outward worship as shall leave nothing of the duty prescribed but the empty name. (2.) Praying before an image, or worshipping God or Christ by an image, is but an outward mode of worship, yet such as renders the whole idolatrous. (3.) Any outward mode of worship, the attendance whereunto or the observance whereof is prejudicial unto the due performance of the duty whereunto it is annexed, is inexpedient; and what there is hereof in the present instance must be judged from the preceding discourse.

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TWO DISCOURSES

CONCERNING

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS WORK:

THE ONE,

OF THE SPIRIT AS A COMFORTER;

THE OTHER,

AS HE IS THE AUTHOR OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE two following discourses appeared posthumously in 1693. According to a statement of the author at the beginning of them, they complete his design in this exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit. The discourse on his office as a Comforter is valuable, from the exposition of several interesting texts; but the author gives us to understand that it is to be taken in connection with what he has written elsewhere on this office of the Spirit, and he refers especially to his works on Communion with God, and on the Perseverance of the Saints. See vols. II. and XI. The discourse on Spiritual Gifts, though comparatively short, is the second part of the main body of the whole work on the Spirit; and, from various allusions to it in other works of the author, he seems to have attached considerable importance to it. See vol. XV. p. 249.

ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST TREATISE.

In the work of the Spirit as a Comforter, there fall to be considered,—I. His especial office as such; II. His discharge of it; and, III. The effects of it towards believers.

I. In his *office*, there are implied an especial trust, mission, name, and work, chap. I.

II. The general properties of this office, as *discharged* by the Holy Spirit, are unfolded:—1. Infinite condescension; 2. Unspeakable love; 3. Infinite power; and, 4. Unchangeable continuance with the church, II.

III. In regard to his *effects* on believers, it is first proved that his effectual consolations are the privilege of believers exclusively, III. And some of his operations in them as such, and of the benefits which they in consequence enjoy, are specified. His operations in them *generally* are unfolded under the head of the "inhabitation of the Spirit;" which is first discriminated from erroneous views respecting it, and then proved from Scripture, IV. Among the *special* benefits indicated are,—1. The unction of the Spirit, V.; 2. The sealing of the Spirit, expounded in a brief comment on Eph. i 13, iv. 30, VI.; and, 3. The Spirit as an earnest, considered in reference to 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5, Eph. i. 14. An application of the preceding truths concludes the treatise, VII.

ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND TREATISE.

The dispensation of the Spirit for the edification of the church is twofold; including, first, the bestowal of saving grace; and, secondly, the communication of spiritual gifts. The former has already been considered in books III.–VIII. of this work on the dispensation of the Spirit. The latter, spiritual gifts, as distinguished from saving graces, it is proposed to discuss in reference to the following points:—1. Their name; 2. Their nature in general; 3. Their distribution; 4. Their particular nature; and, 5. Their use in the church of God. Some remarks are made on their name, chap. I. Their nature generally is considered with reference,—1. To their points of agreement with saving graces, (1.) They are both the purchase of Christ; (2.) They agree in their immediate efficient cause—the Holy Spirit; (3.) In the end contemplated,—the good of the church; and, (4.) In the bounty of Christ, as their source. 2. The points of difference are,—(1.) Saving graces are the *fruit*, gifts are but the *effects* of the Spirit; (2.) Saving graces are the fruit of electing love; (3.) The result of the covenant; and, (4.) Have respect unto the priestly office of Christ; (5.) Gifts and graces differ as to their ultimate issue, the former being sometimes lost, the latter never; (6.) Saving graces are imparted directly for the benefit of those who receive them, and gifts for the benefit of others; and, (7.) They differ, finally and chiefly, in their subjects, operations, and effects, II. Gifts are distributed into,—1. Gifts implying powers and duties conjoined; and, 2. Gifts qualifying for duties simply. 1. Of the former, a subdivision is made into gifts extraordinary and ordinary:—(1.) Extraordinary gifts constituted extraordinary officers—apostles, evangelists, and prophets, III. The gifts themselves, in virtue of which they exercised these extraordinary offices, are, first, powers exceeding the natural faculties of their minds; and, secondly, the special enlargement and adaptation of their natural faculties for their work: these are considered in an exposition of 1 Cor. xii. 7–11, IV. The origin, duration, use, and end, of extraordinary gifts are considered, V. (2.) The ordinary gifts are viewed in relation to the Christian ministry, the eminent value of which is seen from the grandeur of its introduction, from its original acquisition, from the immediate cause of its actual communication, from its own nature, from the variety of offices in it, and from the end designed by it, VI. The reality of the spiritual gifts requisite for the discharge of the ministerial office is proved, from the promise of Christ, Matt. xxviii. 20; the presence of Christ by the Spirit; the covenant promise of the Spirit, Isa. lix. 21; the name given to the gospel, "The ministration of the Spirit;" the end for which the Spirit is promised, administered, and continued; the plain assertions of Scripture; the indispensable necessity for them; and from the actual enjoyment and experience of them, VII. These gifts are enumerated: first, as respects doctrine,—wisdom, skill in the division of the word, and utterance; secondly, as respects the worship of God; and, thirdly, as respects the rule of the church. 2. The ordinary gifts of the Spirit, qualifying for duties only, are alluded to; but the previous discussions are held to supersede the necessity of any full consideration of them. A brief inquiry ensues into the manner in which we may come to participate in these gifts, ministerial or more private, VIII.—ED.

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THE PREFACE.

THAT there are sundry great and eminent promises, referring to New Testament times, concerning the pouring out of the Spirit, none who is acquainted with the Scriptures and believes them can doubt. By the performance of them a church hath been begotten and maintained in the world through all ages since the ascension of Christ, sometimes with greater light and spiritual lustre, and sometimes with less. It hath been one of the glories of the Protestant Reformation that it hath been accompanied with a very conspicuous and remarkable effusion of the Spirit; and, indeed, thereby there hath from heaven a seal been set and a witness borne unto that great work of God. In this invaluable blessing we in this nation have had a rich and plentiful share, insomuch that it seems Satan and his ministers have been tormented and exasperated thereby; and thence it is come to pass that there have some risen up among us who have manifested themselves to be not only despisers in heart, but virulent reproachers of the operations of the Spirit. God, who knows how to bring good out of evil, did, for holy and blessed ends of his own, suffer those horrid blasphemies to be particularly vented.

On this occasion it was that this great, and learned, and holy person, the author of these discourses, took up thoughts of writing concerning the blessed Spirit and his whole economy, as I understood from himself sundry years ago, discoursing with him concerning some books, then newly published, full of contumely and contempt of the Holy Spirit and his operations; for as it was with Paul at Athens when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, so was Dr Owen's spirit stirred in him when he read the scoffs and blasphemies cast upon the Holy Spirit and his grace, and gifts, and aids, in some late writers.

Had not Pelagius vented his corrupt opinions concerning the grace of God, it is like the church had never had the learned and excellent writings of Augustine in defence thereof. It appears from Bradwardin that the revival of Pelagianism in his days stirred up his zealous and pious spirit to write that profound and elaborate book of his, "De Causa Dei." Arminius and the Jesuists, endeavouring to plant the same weed again, produced the scholastic writings of Twisse and Ames (not to mention foreign divines); for which we in this generation have abundant cause of enlarged thankfulness unto the Father of lights. The occasion which the Holy Ghost laid hold on to carry forth Paul to write his Epistle to the Galatians (wherein the doctrine of justification by faith is so fully cleared), was the bringing in among them of "another gospel" by corrupt teachers; after which many in those churches were soon drawn away. The obstinate adherence of many among the Jews to the Mosaical rites and observances, and the inclination of others to apostatize from the New Testament worship and ordinances, was in like manner the occasion of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The light which shines and is held out in these epistles, the church of Christ could ill have wanted.

The like way and working of the wisdom of God is to be seen and adored in stirring up this learned and excellent person to communicate and leave unto the world that light, touching the Spirit and his operations, which he had received by that Spirit from the sacred oracles of truth, the Scriptures.

To what advantage and increase of light it is performed is not for so incompetent a pen to say as writes this. Nevertheless, I doubt not but the discerning reader will observe such excellencies shining out in this and other of this great

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author's writings, as do greatly commend them to the church of God, and will do so in after ages, however this corrupt and degenerate generation entertain them. They are not the crude, and hasty, and untimely abortions of a self-full, distempered spirit,—much less the boilings-over of inward corruption and rottenness put into a fermentation; but the mature, sedate, and seasonable issues of a rich magazine of learning, well digested with great exactness of judgment. There is in them a great light cast and reflected on, as well as derived from, the holy Scriptures, those inexhaustible mines of light in sacred things. They are not filled with vain, impertinent jangling, nor with a noise of multiplied futilous distinctions, nor with novel and uncouth terms foreign to the things of God, as the manner of some writers is *ad nauseam usque;* but there is in them a happy and rare conjunction of firm solidity, enlightening clearness, and heart-searching spiritualness, evidencing themselves all along, and thereby approving and commending his writings to the judgment, conscience, spiritual taste, and experience, of all those who have any acquaintance with and relish of the gospel.

On these and such like accounts the writings of this great and learned man, as also his ordinary sermons, if any of them shall be published (as possibly some of them may), will be, while the world stands, an upbraiding and condemning of this generation, whose vitiated and ill-affected eyes could not bear so great a light set up and shining on a candlestick, and which did therefore endeavour to put it under a bushel.

These two discourses, with those formerly published, make up all that Dr Owen perfected or designed on this subject of the Spirit, as the reader may perceive in the account which himself hath given in his prefaces to some of the former pieces, published by himself in his lifetime. Not but that there are some other lucubrations of his on subjects nearly allied unto these, which possibly may be published hereafter,—namely, one entitled, "The Evidences of the Faith of God's Elect," and perhaps some others. What farther he might have had in his thoughts to do is known to Him whom he served so industriously and so faithfully in his spirit in the gospel while he was here on earth, and with whom he now enjoys the reward of all his labours and all his sufferings; for certain it is concerning Dr Owen, that as God gave him very transcendent abilities, so he did therewithal give him a boundless enlargedness of heart, and unsatiable desire to do service to Christ and his church, insomuch that he was thereby carried on through great bodily weakness, languishing, and pains, besides manifold other trials and discouragements, to bring forth out of his treasury, like a scribe well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, many useful and excellent fruits of his studies,—much beyond the expectation and hopes of those who saw how often and how long he was near unto the grave.

But while he was thus indefatigably and restlessly laying out for the service of Christ, in this and succeeding generations, those rich talents with which he was furnished, his Lord said unto him, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." No man ever yet, but Jesus Christ, was able to finish all that was in his heart to do for God. On the removal of such accomplished and useful persons, I have sometimes relieved myself with this thought, that Christ lives in heaven still, and the blessed Spirit, from whom the head and heart of this chosen vessel were so richly replenished, liveth still.

NATH. MATHER.[1]

October 27, 1692.

[1] Nathaniel Mather was the son of Richard Mather, an eminent Puritan divine of Lancashire, from whom descended children and grandchildren distinguished as theologians and preachers both in this country and in America. Nathaniel was pastor of a numerous congregation in Lime Street, London, where he died, A.D. 1697.—ED.

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A DISCOURSE

ON

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A COMFORTER.

CHAPTER I.

The Holy Ghost the comforter of the church by way of office—How he is the church's advocate—John xiv. 16; 1 John ii. 1, 2; John xvi. 8–11 opened.

THAT which remains to complete our discourses concerning the *dispensation of the Holy Spirit,* is the office and work that he hath undertaken for the consolation of the church; and,—

Three things are to be considered with respect unto this head of the grace of the gospel:—I. That the Holy Spirit is the comforter of the church by way of *especial office.* II. What is in that office, or wherein the *discharge* of it doth consist. III. What are the *effects* of it towards believers.

It must be granted that there is some impropriety in that expression, by the *way of office.* An office is not *simply,* nor, it may be, properly spoken of a divine person, who is absolutely so and nothing else. But the like impropriety is to be found in most of the expressions which we use concerning God, for who can speak of him aright or as he ought? Only, we have a safe rule whereby to express our conceptions, even what he speaks of himself. And he hath taught us to learn the work of the Holy Ghost towards us in this matter by ascribing unto him those things which belong unto an office among men.

Four things are required unto the constitution of an office:—1. An especial trust; 2. An especial mission or commission; 3. An especial name; 4. An especial work. All these are required unto an office properly so called; and where they are complied withal by a voluntary susception in the person designed thereunto, an office is completely constituted. And we must inquire how these things in a divine manner do concur in the work of the Holy Spirit as he is the comforter of the church.

First, He is intrusted with this work, and of his own will hath taken it on himself; for when our Saviour was leaving of the world, and had a full prospect of all the evils, troubles, dejections, and dis-

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consolations which would befall his disciples, and knew full well that if they were left unto themselves they would faint and perish under them, he gives them assurance that the work of their consolation and supportment was left intrusted and committed unto the Holy Spirit, and that he would both take care about it and perfect it accordingly.

The Lord Christ, when he left this world, was very far from laying aside his love unto and care of his disciples. He hath given us the highest assurance that he continueth for ever the same care, the same love and grace, towards us, which he had and exercised when he laid down his life for us. See Heb. iv. 14–16, vii. 25, 26. But inasmuch as there was a double work yet to be performed in our behalf, one towards God and the other in ourselves, he hath taken a twofold way for the performance of it. That towards God he was to discharge immediately himself in his human nature; for other mediator between God and man there neither is nor can be any. This he doth by his intercession. Hence there was a necessity that, as to his human nature, the "heaven should receive him until the times of the restitution of all things," as Acts iii. 21. There was so both with respect unto himself and us.

1. Three things with respect unto himself made the exaltation of his human nature in heaven to be necessary; for,—

(1.) It was to be a pledge and token of God's acceptation of him, and approbation of what he had done in the world, John xvi. 7, 8; for what could more declare or evidence the consent and delight of God in what he had done and suffered, than, after he had been so ignominiously treated in the world, to receive him visibly, gloriously, and triumphantly into heaven? "He was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels," and, in the issue, "received up into glory," 1 Tim. iii. 16. Herein God set the great seal of heaven unto his work of mediation, and the preaching of the gospel which ensued thereon; and a testimony hereunto was that which filled his enemies with rage and madness, Acts vii. 55–58. His resurrection confirmed his doctrine with undeniable efficacy; but his assumption into heaven testified unto his person with an astonishing glory.

(2.) It was necessary with respect unto the human nature itself, that, after all its labours and sufferings, it might be "crowned with glory and honour." He was to "suffer" and "enter into his glory," Luke xxiv. 26. Some dispute whether Christ in his human nature merited any thing for himself or no; but, not to immix ourselves in the niceties of that inquiry, it is unquestionable that the highest glory was due to him upon his accomplishment of the work committed unto him in this world, which he therefore lays claim to accordingly, John xvii. 4, 5. It was so,—

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(3.) With respect unto the glorious administration of his kingdom: for as his kingdom is not of this world, so it is not only over this world, or the whole creation below;—the angels of glory, those principalities and powers above, are subject unto him, and belong unto his dominion, Eph. i. 21; Phil. ii. 9–11. Among them, attended with their ready service and obedience unto all his commands, doth he exercise the powers of his glorious kingdom. And they would but degrade him from his glory, without the least advantage unto themselves, who would have him forsake his high and glorious throne in heaven to come and reign among them on the earth, unless they suppose themselves more meet attendants on his regal dignity than the angels themselves, who are mighty in strength and glory.

2. The presence of the human nature of Christ in heaven was necessary with respect unto us. The remainder of his work with God on our behalf was to be carried on by intercession, Heb. vii. 25–27; and whereas this intercession consisteth in the virtual representation of his oblation, or of himself as a lamb slain in sacrifice, it could not be done without his continual appearing in the presence of God, chap. ix. 24.

The other part of the work of Christ respects the church, or believers, as its immediate object; so, in particular, doth his comforting and supporting of them. This is that work which, in a peculiar manner, is committed and intrusted unto the Holy Spirit, after the departure of the human nature of Christ into heaven.

But two things are to be observed concerning it:—1. That whereas this whole work consisteth in the communication of spiritual light, grace, and joy to the souls of believers, it was no less the immediate work of the Holy Ghost whilst the Lord Christ was upon the earth than it is now he is absent in heaven; only, during the time of his conversation here below, in the days of his flesh, his holy disciples looked on him as the only spring and foundation of all their consolation, their only support, guide, and protector, as they had just cause to do. They had yet no insight into the mystery of the dispensation of the Spirit; nor was he yet so given or poured out as to evidence himself and his operation unto their souls. Wherefore they looked on themselves as utterly undone when their Lord and Master began to acquaint them with his leaving of them. No sooner did he tell them of it but "sorrow filled their hearts," John xvi. 6. Wherefore he immediately lets them know that this great work of relieving them from all their sorrows and fears, of dispelling their disconsolations, and supporting them under their trouble, was committed to the Holy Ghost, and would by him be performed in so eminent a manner as that his departure from them would be unto their advantage, verse 7. Wherefore the Holy Spirit did not then

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first begin really and effectually to be the comforter of believers upon the departure of Christ from his disciples, but he is then first promised so to be, upon a double account:—(1.) Of the full declaration and manifestation of it. So things are often said in the Scripture then to be, when they do appear and are made manifest. An eminent instance hereof we have in this case, John vii. 38, 39. The disciples had hitherto looked for all immediately from Christ in the flesh, the dispensation of the Spirit being hid from them. But now this also was to be manifested unto them. Hence the apostle affirms, that "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we him no more," 2 Cor. v. 16; that is, so as to look for grace and consolation immediately from him in the flesh, as it is evident the apostles did before they were instructed in this unknown office of the Holy Ghost. (2.) Of the full exhibition and eminent communication of him unto this end. This in every kind was reserved for the exaltation of Christ, when he received the promise of the Spirit from the Father, and poured it out upon his disciples.

2. The Lord Christ doth not hereby cease to be the comforter of his church; for what he doth by his Spirit, he doth by himself. He is with us unto the end of the world by his Spirit being with us; and he dwelleth in us by the Spirit dwelling in us; and whatever else is done by the Spirit is done by him. And it is so upon a threefold account: for,—

(1.) The Lord Christ as mediator is God and man in one person, and the divine nature is to be considered in all his mediatory operations; for he who worketh them is God, and he worketh them all as God-man, whence they are *theandrical*. And this is proposed unto us in the greatest acts of his humiliation; which the divine nature in itself is not formally capable of. So "God purchased the church with his own blood," Acts xx. 28. "Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. ii. 6–8. Now, in this respect the Lord Christ and the Holy Spirit are one in nature, essence, will, and power. As he said of the Father, "I and my Father are one," John x. 30; so it is with the Spirit,—he and the Spirit are one. Hence all the works of the Holy Spirit are his also. As his works were the works of the Father, and the works of the Father were his, all the operations of the holy Trinity, as to things external unto their divine subsistence, being undivided; so is the work of the Holy Spirit in the consolation of the church his work also.

(2.) Because the Holy Spirit in this condescension unto office acts for Christ and in his name. So the Son acted for and in the name of the Father, where he everywhere ascribed what he did unto the Father in a peculiar manner: "The word," saith he, "which ye

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hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me," John xiv. 24. It is his originally and eminently, because, as spoken by the Lord Christ, he was said by him to speak it. So are those acts of the Spirit whereby he comforteth believers the acts of Christ, because the Spirit speaketh and acteth for him and in his name.

(3.) All those things, those acts of light, grace, and mercy, whereby the souls of the disciples of Christ are comforted by the Holy Ghost, are the things of Christ,—that is, especial fruits of his mediation. So speaketh our Saviour himself of him and his work: "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you," John xvi. 14. All that consolation, peace, and joy, which he communicates unto believers, yea, all that he doth in his whole work towards the elect, is but the effectual communication of the fruits of the mediation of Christ unto them. And this is the first thing that constitutes the office of the Comforter; this work is committed and intrusted unto him in an especial manner, which, in the infinite condescension of his own will, he takes upon him.

Secondly, It farther evinceth the nature of an office in that he is said to be *sent unto the work;* and mission always includeth commission. He who is sent is intrusted and empowered as unto what he is sent about. See Ps. civ. 30; John xiv. 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7. The nature of this sending of the Spirit, and how it is spoken of him in general, hath been considered before, in our declaration of his general adjuncts, or what is affirmed of him in the Scripture, and may not here again be insisted on. It is now mentioned only as an evidence to prove that, in this work of his towards us, he hath taken that on him which hath the nature of an office; for that which he is sent to perform is his office, and he will not fail in the discharge of it. And it is in itself a great principle of consolation unto all true believers, an effectual means of their supportment and refreshment, to consider, that not only is the Holy Ghost their comforter, but also that he is sent of the Father and the Son so to be. Nor can there be a more uncontrollable evidence of the care of Jesus Christ over his church, and towards his disciples in all their sorrows and sufferings, than this is, that he sends the Holy Ghost to be their comforter.

Thirdly, He hath an especial *name* given him, expressing and declaring his office. When the Son of God was to be *incarnate* and born in the world, he had an especial *name* given unto him: "He shall be called Jesus." Now, although there was in this name a signification of the work he was to do,—for he was called Jesus, "because he was to save his people from their sins," Matt. i. 21,—yet was it also that proper name whereby he was to be distinguished from other persons. So the Holy Spirit hath no other name but that of the Holy Spirit, which, how it is *characteristical* of the third person

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in the holy Trinity, hath been before declared. But as both the names Jesus and Christ, though neither of them is the name of an *office*, as one hath dreamed of late, yet have respect unto the work which he had to do and the *office* which he was to undergo, without which he could not have rightly been so called; so hath the Holy Ghost a name given unto him, which is not distinctive with respect unto his personality, but denominative with respect unto his work, and this is ὁ Παράκλητος.

1. This name is used only by the apostle John, and that in his Gospel only, from the mouth of Christ, chap. xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7; and once he useth it himself, applying it unto Christ, 1 John ii. 1, 2, where we render it "An *advocate*."

The Syriac interpreter retains the name פָּרַקְלִיטָא, *Paraclita;* not, as some imagine, from the use of that word before among the Jews, which cannot be proved. Nor is it likely that our Saviour made use of a Greek word barbarously corrupted; מְנַחֵם was the word he employed to this purpose. But looking on it [as] a *proper name* of the Spirit with respect unto his office, he would not translate it.

As this word is applied unto Christ,—which it is in that *one place* of 1 John ii. 1,—it respects his *intercession*, and gives us light into the nature of it. That it is his intercession which the apostle intends is evident from its relation unto his being "our propitiation;" for the oblation of Christ on the earth is the foundation of his intercession in heaven. And he doth therein undertake our patronage, as our advocate, to plead our cause, and in an especial manner to keep off evil from us: for although the intercession of Christ in general respects the procurement of all grace and mercy for us, every thing whereby we may be "saved to the uttermost," Heb. vii. 25, 26, yet his intercession for us as an *advocate* respects sin only, and the evil consequents of it; for so is he in this place said to be our *advocate*, and in this place alone is he said to be so only with respect unto sin: "If any man sin, we have an advocate." Wherefore, his being so doth in particular respect that part of his intercession wherein he undertakes our defence and protection when accused of sin: for Satan is ὁ κατήγορος, the *accuser*, Rev. xii. 10; and when he accuseth believers for sin, Christ is their παράκλητος, their *patron* and *advocate*. For, according unto the duty of a patron or advocate in criminal causes, partly he showeth wherein the accusation is false, and aggravated above the truth, or proceeds upon mistakes; partly, that the crimes charged have not that malice in them that is pretended; and principally he pleadeth his propitiation for them, that so far as they are really guilty they may be graciously discharged.

[As] for this name, as applied unto the Holy Spirit, some translate it a *Comforter*, some an *Advocate*, and some retain the Greek word

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Paraclete. It may be best interpreted from the nature of the work assigned unto him under that name. Some would confine the whole work intended under this name unto his *teaching*, which he is principally promised for; for "the matter and manner of his teaching, what he teacheth, and the way how he doth it, is," they say, "the ground of all consolation unto the church." And there may be something in this interpretation of the word, taking "teaching" in a large sense, for all internal, divine, spiritual operations. So are we said to be "taught of God" when faith is wrought in us, and we are enabled to come unto Christ thereby. And all our consolations are from such internal divine operations. But take "teaching" properly, and we shall see that it is but one distinct act of the work of the Holy Ghost, as here promised, among many. But,—

2. The work of a comforter is principally ascribed unto him; for,—(1.) That he is principally under this name intended as a comforter is evident from the whole context and the occasion of the promise. It was with respect unto the troubles and sorrows of his disciples, with their relief therein, that he is promised under this name by our Saviour. "I will not," saith he, "leave you orphans," John xiv. 18;—"Though I go away from you, yet I will not leave you in a desolate and disconsolate condition." How shall that be prevented in his absence, who was the life and spring of all their comforts? Saith he, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you ἄλλον παράκλητον," verse 16; that is, "another to be your comforter." So he renews again his promise of sending him under this name, because "sorrow had filled their heart" upon the apprehension of his departure, chap. xvi. 6, 7. Wherefore, he is principally considered as a *comforter:* and, as we shall see farther afterward, this is his principal work, most suited unto his nature, as he is the Spirit of peace, love, and joy; for he who is the eternal, essential love of the Divine Being, as existing in the distinct persons of the Trinity, is most meet to communicate a sense of divine love, with delight and joy, unto the souls of believers. Hereby he sets up the "kingdom of God" in them, which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17. And in nothing doth he so evidence his presence in the hearts and spirits of any as by the disposal of them unto spiritual love and joy; for, "shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts," as chap. v. 5, he produceth a principle and frame of *divine love* in our souls, and fills us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." The attribution, therefore, of this name unto him, *The Comforter*, evidenceth that he performs this work in the way of an office.

(2.) Neither is the signification of an *Advocate* to be omitted, seeing what he doth as such tendeth also to the consolation of the

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church. And we must first observe, that the Holy Spirit is not our advocate with God. This belongs alone unto Jesus Christ, and is a part of his office. He is said, indeed, to "make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered," Rom. viii. 26; but this he doth not immediately, or in his own person. He no otherwise "maketh intercession for us" but by enabling us to make intercession according unto the mind of God; for to make intercession *formally* is utterly inconsistent with the divine nature and his person, who hath no other nature but that which is divine. He is, therefore, incapable of being our *advocate* with God; the Lord Christ is so alone, and that on the account of his precedent propitiation made for us. But he is an *advocate* for the church, in, with, and against the world. Such an advocate is one that undertaketh the protection and defence of another as to any cause wherein he is engaged. The cause wherein the disciples of Christ are engaged in and against the world is the truth of the gospel, the power and kingdom of their Lord and Master. This they testify unto; this is opposed by the world; and this, under various forms, appearances, and pretences, is that which they suffer reproaches and persecutions for in every generation. In this cause the Holy Spirit is their advocate, justifying Jesus Christ and the gospel against the world.

And this he doth three ways:—[1.] By suggesting unto and furnishing the witnesses of Christ with pleas and arguments to the conviction of gainsayers. So it is promised that he should do, Matt. x. 18–20, "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." They were to be "given up,"—that is, delivered up as malefactors,—unto kings and rulers, for their faith in Christ, and the testimony they gave unto him. In this condition the best of men are apt to be solicitous about their answers, and the *plea* they are to make in the defence of themselves and their cause. Our Saviour, therefore, gives them encouragement, not only from the truth and goodness of their cause, but also from the ability they should have in pleading for it unto the conviction or confusion of their adversaries. And this he tells them should come to pass, not by any power or faculty in themselves, but by the aid and supply they should receive from this *Advocate*, who in them would speak by them. This was that "mouth and wisdom" which he promised unto them, "which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay nor resist," Luke xxi. 15;—a present supply of courage, boldness, and liberty of speech, above and beyond their natural temper and abilities,

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immediately upon their receiving of the Holy Ghost. And their very enemies saw the effects of it unto their astonishment. Upon the plea they made before the council at Jerusalem, it is said that "when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled," Acts iv. 13. They saw their outward condition, that they were *poor*, and of the meanest of the people, yet carried it with courage and boldness before this great sanhedrim, with whose authority and unusual appearance in grandeur all persons of that sort were wont to be abashed and to tremble at them. They found them *ignorant* and *unlearned* in that skill and learning which the world admired, yet [to] plead their cause unto their confusion. They could not, therefore, but discern and acknowledge that there was a *divine power* present with them, which acted them above themselves, their state, their natural or acquired abilities. This was the work of this *Advocate* in them, who had undertaken the defence of their cause. So when Paul pleaded the same cause before Agrippa and Felix, one of them confessed his conviction, and the other trembled in his judgment-seat.

Neither hath he been wanting unto the defence of the same cause, in the same manner, in succeeding generations. All the story of the church is filled with instances of persons mean in their outward condition, timorous by nature, and unaccustomed unto dangers, unlearned and low in their natural abilities, who, in the face of rulers and potentates, in the sight of prisons, tortures, fires, provided for their destruction, have pleaded the cause of the gospel with courage and success, unto the astonishment and confusion of their adversaries. Neither shall any disciple of Christ in the same case want the like assistance in some due measure and proportion, who expects it from him in a way of believing, and depends upon it. Examples we have hereof every day in persons acted above their own natural temper and abilities, unto their own admiration; for being conscious unto themselves of their own fears, despondencies, and disabilities, it is a surprisal unto them to find how all their fears have disappeared and their minds have been enlarged, when they have been called unto trial for their testimony unto the gospel. We are, in such cases, to make use of any reason, skill, wisdom, or ability of speech which we have, or other honest and advantageous circumstances which present themselves unto us, as the apostle Paul did on all occasions; but our dependence is to be solely on the presence and supplies of our blessed Advocate, who will not suffer us to be utterly defective in what is necessary unto the defence and justification of our cause.

[2.] He is the advocate for Christ, the church, and the gospel, in and by his communication of spiritual gifts, both extraordinary and

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ordinary, unto them that do believe; for these are things, at least in their effects, visible unto the world. Where men are not utterly blinded by prejudice, love of sin and of the world, they cannot but discern somewhat of a divine power in these supernatural gifts. Wherefore, they openly testify unto the divine approbation of the gospel, and the faith that is in Christ Jesus. So the apostle confirms the truths that he had preached by this argument, that therewith and thereby, or in the confirmation of it, the Spirit, as unto the communication of gifts, was received, Gal. iii. 2. And herein is he the church's advocate, justifying their cause openly and visibly by this dispensation of his power towards them and in their behalf. But because we have treated separately and at large of the nature and use of these spiritual gifts, I shall not here insist on the consideration of them.[1]

[3.] By internal efficacy in the dispensation of the word. Herein also is he the advocate of the church against the world, as he is declared, John xvi. 8–11, "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." That which is ascribed unto him with respect unto the world is expressed by the word ἐλέγξει,—"he will reprove" or convince. Ἐλέγχω in the Scripture is used variously. Sometimes it is to manifest, or bring forth unto light: Eph. v. 13, Τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτὸς, φανεροῦται·—"For all things that are reproved," or discovered, "are made manifest by the light." And it hath the same sense, John iii. 20. Sometimes it is to rebuke and reprove: 1 Tim. v. 20, Τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας ἐνώπιον πάντων ἔλεγχε·—"Them that sin rebuke before all." So also Rev. iii. 19; Tit. i. 13. Sometimes it is so to convince as in that to stop the mouth of an adversary, that he shall have nothing to answer or reply: John viii. 9, Ὑπὸ τῆς συνειδήσεως ἐλεγχόμενοι·—"Being convicted by their own conscience;" so as, not having a word to reply, they deserted their cause. So Tit. i. 9, Τοὺς ἀντιλέγοντας ἐλέγχειν,—"To convince gainsayers," is explained, verse 11, by ἐπιστομίζειν, "to stop their mouth," namely, by the convincing evidence of truth. Ἔλεγχος is an uncontrollable evidence, or an evident argument, Heb. xi. 1. Wherefore, ἐλέγχειν here is, "by undeniable argument and evidence, so to convince the world, or the adversaries of Christ and the gospel, as that they shall have nothing to reply." This is the work and duty of an advocate, who will absolutely vindicate his client when his cause will bear it.

And the effect hereof is twofold; for all persons, upon such an overpowering conviction, take one of these two ways:—1*st*. They

[1] See the following treatise in this volume.—Ed.

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yield unto the truth and embrace it, as finding no ground to stand upon in its refusal; or, 2*dly*. They fly out into desperate rage and madness, as being obstinate in their hatred against the truth, and destitute of all reason to oppose it. An instance of the former way we have in those Jews unto whom Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Reproving and convincing of them beyond all contradiction, "they were pricked in their heart, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and therewithal came over unto the faith, Acts ii. 37, 41. Of the latter we have many instances in the dealing of our Saviour with that people; for when he had at any time convinced them, and stopped their mouths as to the cause in hand, they called him Beelzebub, cried out that he had a devil, took up stones to throw at him, and conspired his death with all demonstrations of desperate rage and madness, John viii. 48, 59, x. 20, 31, 39. So it was in the case of Stephen, and the testimony he gave unto Christ, Acts vii. 54–58; and with Paul, Acts xxii. 22, 23,—an instance of bestial rage not to be paralleled in any other case, but in this it has often fallen out in the world. And the same effects this work of the Holy Ghost, as the advocate of the church, ever had, and still hath upon the world. Many, being convicted by him in the dispensation of the word, are really humbled and converted unto the faith. So God "adds daily to the church such as shall be saved." But the generality of the world are enraged by the same work against Christ, the gospel, and those by whom it is dispensed. Whilst the word is preached in a formal manner, the world is well enough contented that it should have a quiet passage among them; but wherever the Holy Ghost puts forth a convincing efficacy in the dispensation of it, the world is enraged by it: which is no less an evidence of the power of their conviction than the other is of a better success.

The subject-matter concerning which the Holy Ghost manageth his plea by the word against the world, as the advocate of the church, is referred unto the three heads of "sin, righteousness, and judgment," John xvi. 8, the especial nature of them being declared, verses 9–11.

(1*st*.) What sin it is in particular that the Holy Spirit shall so plead with the world about, and convince them of, is declared verse 9, "Of sin, because they believe not on me." There are many sins whereof men may be convinced by the light of nature, Rom. ii. 14, 15, more that they are reproved for by the letter of the law; and it is the work of the Spirit also in general to make these convictions effectual: but these belong not unto the cause which he hath to plead for the church against the world, nor is that such as any can be brought unto conviction about by the light of nature or sentence of the law, but it is the work of the Spirit alone by the gospel; and

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this, in the first place, is unbelief, particularly not believing in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. This he testified concerning himself, this his works evinced him to be, and this both Moses and the prophets bare witness unto. Hereon he tells the Jews, that if they believed not that he was he,—that is, the Son of God, the Messiah and Saviour of the world,—"they should die in their sins," John viii. 21, 24. But in this unbelief, in this rejection of Christ, the Jews and the rest of the world justified themselves, and not only so, but despised and persecuted them who believed in him. This was the fundamental difference between believers and the world, the head of that cause wherein they were rejected by it as foolish and condemned as impious. And herein was the Holy Ghost their advocate; for he did by such undeniable evidences, arguments, and testimonies, convince the world of the truth and glory of Christ, and of the sin of unbelief, that they were everywhere either converted or enraged thereby. So some of them, upon this conviction, "gladly received the word, and were baptized," Acts ii. 41. Others, upon the preaching of the same truth by the apostles, "were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them," chap. v. 33. In this work he still continueth. And it is an act of the same kind whereby he yet in particular convinceth any of the sin of unbelief, which cannot be done but by the effectual internal operation of his power.

(*2dly.*) He thus convinceth the world of righteousness: John xvi. 10, "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Both the personal righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of his office are intended; for concerning both these the church hath a contest with the world, and they belong unto that cause wherein the Holy Spirit is their advocate. Christ was looked on by the world as an evil-doer; accused to be a glutton, a wine-bibber, a seditious person, a seducer, a blasphemer, a malefactor, in every kind;—whence his disciples were both despised and destroyed for believing in such an one; and it is not to be declared how they were scorned and reproached, and what they suffered on this account. In the meantime, they pleaded and gave testimony unto his righteousness,—that "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth," that "he fulfilled all righteousness," and was the "Holy One" of God. And herein was the Holy Ghost their advocate, convincing the world principally by this argument, that after all he did and suffered in this world, as the highest evidence imaginable of God's approbation of him and what he did, he was gone to the Father, or assumed up into glory. The poor blind man whose eyes were opened by him pleaded this as a forcible argument against the Jews, that he was no sinner, in that God heard him so as that he had opened his

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eyes; whose evidence and conviction they could not bear, but it turned them into rage and madness, John ix. 30–34. How much more glorious and effectual must this evidence needs be of his righteousness and holiness, and of God's approbation of him, that after all he did in this world, he went unto his Father, and was taken up into glory! for such is the meaning of these words, "Ye shall see me no more;" that is, "There shall be an end put unto my state of humiliation, and of my converse with you in this world, because I am to enter into my glory." That the Lord Christ then went unto his Father, that he was so gloriously exalted, undeniable testimony was given by the Holy Ghost, unto the conviction of the world. So this argument is pleaded by Peter, Acts ii. 33. This is enough to stop the mouths of all the world in this cause, that he sent the Holy Ghost from the Father to communicate spiritual gifts of all sorts unto his disciples; and there could be no higher evidence of his acceptance, power, and glory with him; and the same testimony he still continueth, in the communication of ordinary gifts in the ministry of the gospel. Respect also may be had (which sense I would not exclude) unto the righteousness of his office. There ever was a great contest about the righteousness of the world. This the Gentiles looked after by the light of nature, and the Jews by the works of the law. In this state the Lord Christ is proposed as the "LORD our righteousness," as he who was to "bring in," and had brought in, "everlasting righteousness," Dan. ix. 24, being "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. This the Gentiles rejected as folly,—Christ crucified was "foolishness" unto them; and to the Jews it was a "stumbling-block," as that which everted the whole law; and, generally, they all concluded that he could not save himself, and therefore it was not probable that others should be saved by him. But herein also is the Holy Spirit the advocate of the church; for, in the dispensation of the word, he so convinceth men of an impossibility for them to attain a righteousness of their own, as that they must either submit to the righteousness of God in Christ or die in their sins.

(*3dly.*) He "convinceth the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Christ himself was judged and condemned by the world. In that judgment Satan, the prince of this world, had the principal hand; for it was effected in the hour and under the power of darkness. And no doubt but he hoped that he had carried his cause when he had prevailed to have the Lord Christ publicly judged and condemned. And this judgment the world sought by all means to justify and make good. But the whole of it is called over again by the Holy Ghost, pleading in the cause and for the faith of the church; and he doth it so effectually as that the judg-

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ment is turned on Satan himself. Judgment, with unavoidable conviction, passed on all that superstition, idolatry, and wickedness, which he had filled the world withal. And whereas he had borne himself, under various marks, shades, and pretences, to be "the god of this world," the supreme ruler over all, and accordingly was worshipped all the world over, he is now by the gospel laid open and manifested to be an accursed apostate, a murderer, and the great enemy of mankind.

Wherefore, taking the name Paracletus in this sense for an advocate, it is proper unto the Holy Ghost in some part of his work in and towards the church. And whensoever we are called to bear witness unto Christ and the gospel, we abandon our strength and betray our cause if we do not use all means appointed of God unto that end to engage him in our assistance.

But it is as a comforter that he is chiefly promised unto us, and as such is he expressed unto the church by this name.

Fourthly, That he hath a peculiar work committed unto him, suitable unto this mission or commission and name, is that which will appear in the declaration of the particulars wherein it doth consist. For the present we only assert, in general, that his work it is to support, cherish, relieve, and comfort the church, in all trials and distresses; and this is all that we intend when we say that it is his office so to do.

CHAPTER II.

General adjuncts or properties of the office of a comforter, as exercised by the Holy Spirit.

To evidence yet farther the nature of this office and work, we may consider and inquire into the general adjuncts of it, as exercised by the Holy Spirit; and they are four:—

First, Infinite condescension. This is among those mysteries of the divine dispensation which we may admire but cannot comprehend; and it is the property of faith alone to act and live upon incomprehensible objects. What reason cannot comprehend it will neglect, as that which it hath no concernment in nor can have benefit by. Faith is most satisfied and cherished with what is infinite and inconceivable, as resting absolutely in divine revelation. Such is this condescension of the Holy Ghost. He is by nature "over all, God blessed for ever;" and it is a condescension in the divine excellency to concern itself in a particular manner in any creature whatever. God "humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth," Ps. cxiii. 5, 6; how much more doth he do

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so in submitting himself unto the discharge of an office in the behalf of poor worms here below!

This, I confess, is most astonishing, and attended with the most incomprehensible rays of divine wisdom and goodness in the condescension of the Son; for he carried the term of it unto the lowest and most abject condition that a rational, intelligent nature is capable of. So is it represented by the apostle, Phil. ii. 6–8: for he not only took our nature into personal union with himself, but became in it, in his outward condition, as a servant, yea, as a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people; and became subject to death, the ignominious, shameful death of the cross. Hence this dispensation of God was filled up with infinite wisdom, goodness, and grace. How this exinanition of the Son of God was compensated with the glory that did ensue, we shall rejoice in the contemplation of unto all eternity. And then shall the character of all divine excellencies be more gloriously conspicuous on this condescension of the Son of God than ever they were on the works of the whole creation, when this goodly fabric of heaven and earth was brought, by divine power and wisdom, through darkness and confusion, out of nothing.

The condescension of the Holy Spirit unto his work and office is not, indeed, of the same kind, as to the "terminus ad quem," or the object of it. He assumes not our nature, he exposeth not himself unto the injuries of an outward state and condition; but yet it is such as is more to be the object of our faith in adoration than of our reason in disquisition. Consider the thing in itself: how one person in the holy Trinity, subsisting in the unity of the same divine nature, should undertake to execute the love and grace of the other persons, and in their names,—what do we understand of it? This holy economy, in the distinct and subordinate actings of the divine persons in these external works, is known only unto, is understood only by, themselves. Our wisdom it is to acquiesce in express divine revelation. Nor have they scarcely more dangerously erred by whom these things are denied, than those have done who, by a proud and conceited subtilty of mind, pretend unto a conception of them, which they express in words and terms, as they say, "precise and accurate;" indeed, foolish and curious, whether of other men's coining or their own finding out. Faith keeps the soul at a holy distance from these infinite depths of the divine wisdom, where it profits more by reverence and holy fear than any can do by their utmost attempt to draw nigh unto that inaccessible light wherein these glories of the divine nature do dwell.

But we may more steadily consider this condescension with respect unto its object: the Holy Spirit thereby becomes a comforter unto

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us, poor, miserable worms of the earth. And what heart can conceive the glory of this grace? what tongue can express it? Especially will its eminency appear if we consider the ways and means whereby he doth so comfort us, and the opposition from us which he meets withal therein; whereof we must treat afterward.

Secondly, Unspeakable love accompanieth the susception and discharge of this office, and that working by tenderness and compassion. The Holy Spirit is said to be the divine, eternal, mutual love of the Father and the Son. And although I know that much wariness is to be used in the declaration of these mysteries, nor are expressions concerning them to be ventured on not warranted by the letter of the Scripture, yet I judge that this notion doth excellently express, if not the distinct manner of subsistence, yet the mutual, internal operation of the persons of the blessed Trinity; for we have no term for, nor notion of, that ineffable complacence and eternal rest which is therein beyond this of love. Hence it is said that "God is *love*," 1 John iv. 8, 16. It doth not seem to be an essential property of the nature of God only that the apostle doth intend, for it is proposed unto us as a motive unto mutual love among ourselves, and this consists not simply in the habit or affection of love, but in the actings of it in all its fruits and duties: for so is God love, as that the internal actings of the holy persons, which are in and by the Spirit, are all the ineffable actings of love, wherein the nature of the Holy Spirit is expressed unto us. The apostle prays for the presence of the Spirit with the Corinthians under the name of the "God of love and peace," 2 Epist. xiii. 11. And the communication of the whole love of God unto us is committed unto the Spirit; for "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. v. 5. And hence the same apostle distinctly mentioneth the love of the Spirit, conjoining it with all the effects of the mediation of Christ: chap. xv. 30, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit;"—"I do so on the account of the respect you have unto Christ, and all that he hath done for you; which is a motive irresistible unto believers. I do it also for the love of the Spirit; all that love which he acts and communicates unto you." Wherefore, in all the actings of the Holy Ghost towards us, and especially in this of his susception of an office in the behalf of the church, which is the foundation of them all, his love is principally to be considered, and that he chooseth this way of acting and working towards us to express his peculiar, personal character, as he is the eternal love of the Father and the Son. And among all his actings towards us, which are all acts of love, this is most conspicuous in those wherein he is a comforter.

Wherefore, because this is of great use unto us, as that which

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ought to have, and which will have, if duly apprehended, a great influence on our faith and obedience, and is, moreover, the spring of all the consolations we receive by and from him, we shall give a little evidence unto it,—namely, that the love of the Spirit is principally to be considered in this office and the discharge of it: for whatever good we receive from any one, whatever benefit or present relief we have thereby, we can receive no comfort or consolation in it unless we are persuaded that it proceeds from love; and what doth so, be it never so small, hath refreshment and satisfaction in it unto every ingenuous nature. It is love alone that is the salt of every kindness or benefit, and which takes out of it every thing that may be noxious or hurtful. Without an apprehension hereof and satisfaction herein, multiplied beneficial effects produce no internal satisfaction in them that do receive them, nor put any real engagement on their minds, Prov. xxiii. 6–8. It is, therefore, of concernment unto us to secure this ground of all our consolation, in the full assurance of faith that there was infinite love in the susception of this office by the Holy Ghost. And it is evident that so it was,—

1. From the nature of the work itself; for the consolation or comforting of any who stand in need thereof is an immediate effect of love, with its inseparable properties of pity and compassion. Especially it must be so where no advantage redounds unto the comforter, but the whole of what is done respects entirely the good and relief of them that are comforted; for what other affection of mind can be the principle hereof, from whence it may proceed? Persons may be relieved under oppression by justice, under want by bounty, but to comfort and refresh the minds of any is a peculiar act of sincere love and compassion: so, therefore, must this work of the Holy Ghost be esteemed to be. I do not intend only that his love is eminent and discernible in it, but that it proceeds solely from love. And without a faith hereof we cannot have the benefit of this divine dispensation, nor will any comforts that we receive be firm or stable; but when this is once graciously fixed in our minds, that there is not one drop of comfort or spiritual refreshment administered by the Holy Ghost, but that it proceeds from his infinite love, then are they disposed into that frame which is needful to comply with him in his operations. And, in particular, all the acts wherein the discharge of this office doth consist are all of them acts of the highest love, of that which is infinite, as we shall see in the consideration of them.

2. The manner of the performance of this work is so expressed as to evince and expressly demonstrate that it is a work of love. So is it declared where he is promised unto the church for this work: Isa. lxvi. 13, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem." He whom his mother

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comforteth is supposed to be in some kind of distress; nor, indeed, is there any, of any kind, that may befall a child, whose mother is kind and tender, but she will be ready to administer unto him all the consolation that she is able. And how, or in what manner, will such a mother discharge this duty, it is better conceived than it can be expressed. We are not, in things natural, able to take in a conception of greater love, care, and tenderness, than is in a tender mother who comforts her children in distress. And hereby doth the prophet graphically represent unto our minds the manner whereby the Holy Ghost dischargeth this office towards us. Neither can a child contract greater guilt, or manifest a more depraved habit of mind, than to be regardless of the affection of a mother endeavouring its consolation. Such children may, indeed, sometimes, through the bitterness of their spirits, by their pains and distempers, be surprised into frowardness, and a present regardlessness of the mother's kindness and compassion, which she knows full well how to bear withal; but if they continue to have no sense of it, if it make no impression upon them, they are of a profligate constitution. And so it may be sometimes with believers; they may, by surprisals into spiritual frowardness, by weakness, by unaccountable despondencies, be regardless of divine influences of consolation;—but all these things the great Comforter will bear with and overcome. See Isa. lvii. 15–19, "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him." When persons are under sorrows and disconsolations upon the account of pain and sickness, or the like, in a design of comfort towards them, it will yet be needful sometimes to make use of means and remedies that may be painful and vexatious; and these may be apt to irritate and provoke poor, wayward patients. Yet is not a mother discouraged hereby, but proceeds on in her way until the cure be effected and consolation administered. So doth God by his Spirit deal with his church. His design is "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," verse 15; and he gives this reason of it,—namely, that if he should not act in infinite love and condescension towards them, but deal with

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them after their deservings, they would utterly be consumed, "the spirit would fail before him, and the souls which he hath made," verse 16. However, in the pursuit of this work, he must use some sharp remedies, that were needful for the curing of their distempers and for their spiritual recovery. Because of their iniquity, "the iniquity of their covetousness," which was the principal disease they laboured under, "he was wroth and smote them, and hid his face from them," because his so doing was necessary to their cure, verse 17. And how do they behave themselves under this dealing of God with them? They grow peevish and froward under his hand, choosing rather to continue in their disease than to be thus healed by him: "They went on frowardly in the way of their hearts," verse 17. How, therefore, doth this Holy Comforter now deal with them? Doth he give them up unto their frowardness? doth he leave and forsake them under their distemper? No; a tender mother will not so deal with her children. He manageth his work with such infinite love, tenderness, and compassion, as that he will overcome all their frowardness, and ceases not until he hath effectually administered consolation unto them: Verse 18, "I have seen," saith he, all these "his ways," all his frowardness and miscarriages, and yet, saith he, "I will heal him;" —"I will not for all this be diverted from my work and the pursuit of my design; before I have done, I will lead him into a right frame, 'and restore comforts unto him.' And that there may be no failure herein, I will do it by a creating act of power:" Verse 19, "I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace." This is the method of the Holy Ghost in administering consolation unto the church, by openly evidencing that love and compassion from whence it doth proceed. And without this method should no one soul be ever spiritually refreshed under its dejections; for we are apt to behave ourselves frowardly, more or less, under the work of the Holy Ghost towards us. Infinite love and compassion alone, working by patience and long-suffering, can carry it on unto perfection. But if we are not only froward under particular occasions, temptations, and surprisals, clouding our present view of the Holy Spirit in his work, but are also habitually careless and negligent about it, and do never labour to come into satisfaction in it, but always indulge unto the peevishness and frowardness of unbelief, it argues a most depraved, unthankful frame of heart, wherein the soul of God cannot be well pleased.

3. It is an evidence that his work proceedeth from and is wholly managed in love, in that we are cautioned not to *grieve* him, Eph. iv. 30. And a double evidence of the greatness of his love is herein tendered unto us in that caution:—(1.) In that those alone are subject to be grieved by us who act in love towards us. If we comply not with the will and rule of others, they may be provoked, vexed,

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instigated unto wrath against us; but those alone who love us are grieved at our miscarriages. A severe schoolmaster may be more provoked with the fault of his scholar than the father is, but the father is grieved with it when the other is not. Whereas, therefore, the Holy Spirit is not subject or liable unto the affection of grief as it is a passion in us, we are cautioned not to grieve him, namely, to teach us with what love and compassion, with what tenderness and holy delight, he performs his work in us and towards us. (2.) It is so in that he hath undertaken the work of comforting them who are so apt and prone to grieve him, as for the most part we are. The great work of the Lord Christ was to die for us; but that which puts an eminence on his love is, that he died for us whilst we were yet his enemies, sinners, and ungodly, Rom. v. 6–10. And as the work of the Holy Ghost is to comfort us, so a lustre is put upon it by this, that he comforts those who are very prone to grieve himself; for although, it may be, we will not, through a peculiar affection, hurt, molest, or grieve them again by whom we are grieved, yet who is it that will set himself to comfort those that grieve him, and that when so they do? But even herein the Holy Ghost commendeth his love unto us, that even whilst we grieve him, by his consolations he recovers us from those ways wherewith he is grieved.

This, therefore, is to be fixed as an important principle in this part of the mystery of God, that the principal foundation of the susception of this office of a comforter by the Holy Spirit is his own peculiar and ineffable love: for both the efficacy of our consolation and the life of our obedience do depend hereon; for when we know that every acting of the Spirit of God towards us, every gracious impression from him on our understandings, wills, or affections, are all of them in pursuit of that infinite peculiar love whence it was that he took upon him the office of a comforter, they cannot but all of them influence our hearts with spiritual refreshment. And when faith is defective in this matter, so that it doth not exercise itself in the consideration of this love of the Holy Ghost, we shall never arrive unto solid, abiding, strong consolation. And as for those by whom all these things are despised and derided, it is no strait unto me whether I should renounce the gospel or reject them from an interest in Christianity, for the approbation of both is inconsistent. Moreover, it is evident how great a motive hence ariseth unto cheerful, watchful, universal obedience; for all the actings of sin or unbelief in us are, in the first place, reactions unto those of the Holy Ghost in us and upon us. By them is he resisted in his persuasions, quenched in his motions, and himself grieved. If there be any holy ingenuity in us, it will excite a vigilant diligence not to be overtaken with such wickednesses against unspeakable love. He will

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walk both safely and fruitfully whose soul is kept under a sense of the love of the Holy Spirit herein.

Thirdly, Infinite power is also needful unto, and accordingly evident in, the discharge of this office. This we have fixed, that the Holy Ghost is, and ever was, the comforter of the church. Whatever, therefore, is spoken thereof belongs peculiarly unto him. And it is expressed as proceeding from and accompanied with infinite power; as also, the consideration of persons and things declares it necessary that so it should be. Thus we have the church's complaint in a deep disconsolation: "My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God," Isa. xl. 27. It is not so much her affliction and miseries, as an apprehension that God regardeth her not therein, which causeth her dejection. And when this is added unto any pressing trouble, whether internal or external, it doth fully constitute a state of spiritual disconsolation; for when faith can take a prospect of the love, care, and concernment of God in us and our condition, however grievous things may be at present unto us, yet can we not be comfortless. And what is it that, in the consolation which God intendeth his church, he would have them to consider in himself, as an assured ground of relief and refreshment? This he declares himself in the following verses: Verses 28–31, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" etc. The church seemeth not at all to doubt of his power, but of his love, care, and faithfulness towards her. But it is his infinite power that he chooseth first to satisfy her in, as that which all his actings towards her were founded in and resolved into; without a due consideration whereof all that otherwise could be expected would not yield her relief. And this being fixed on their minds, he next proposeth unto them his infinite understanding and wisdom: "There is no searching of his understanding." Conceive aright of his infinite power, and then leave things unto his sovereign, unsearchable wisdom for the management of them, as to ways degrees, times and seasons. An apprehension of want of love and care in God towards them was that which immediately caused their disconsolation; but the ground of it was in their unbelief of his infinite power and wisdom. Wherefore, in the work of the Holy Ghost for the comforting of the church, his infinite power is peculiarly to be considered. So the apostle proposeth it unto the weakest believers for their supportment, and as that which should assure them of the victory in their conflict, that "greater is he that is in them than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. That Holy Spirit which is bestowed on them and dwelleth in them is greater, more able and powerful, than Satan, that attempts their ruin in and by the world, seeing he

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is of power omnipotent. Thoughts of our disconsolation arise from the impressions that Satan makes upon our minds and consciences, by sin, temptation, and persecution; for we find not in ourselves such an ability of resistance as from whence we may have an assurance of a conquest. "This," saith the apostle, "you are to expect from the power of the Holy Spirit, which is infinitely above whatever Satan hath to make opposition unto you, or to bring any disconsolation on you. This will cast out all that fear which hath torment accompanying of it." And however this may be disregarded by them who are filled with an apprehension of their own self-sufficiency, as unto all the ends of their living and obedience unto God, as likewise that they have a never-failing spring of rational considerations about them, able to administer all necessary relief and comfort at all times; yet those who are really sensible of their own condition and that of other believers, if they understand what it is to be comforted with the "consolations of God," and how remote they are from those delusions which men embrace under the name of their "rational considerations," will grant that the faith of infinite power is requisite unto any solid spiritual comfort: for,—

1. Who can declare the dejections, sorrows, fears, despondencies, and discouragements that believers are obnoxious unto, in the great variety of their natures, causes, effects, and occasions? What relief can be suited unto them but what is an emanation from infinite power? Yea, such is the spiritual frame and constitution of their souls, as that they will ofttimes reject all means of comfort that are not communicated by an almighty efficacy. Hence God "creates the fruit of the lips, Peace, peace," Isa. lvii. 19; produceth peace in the souls of men by a creating act of his power, and directs us, in the place before mentioned, to look for it only from the infinite excellency of his nature. None, therefore, was meet for this work of being the church's comforter but the Spirit of God alone. He only, by his almighty power, can remove all their fears, and support them under all their dejections, in all that variety wherewith they are attempted and exercised. Nothing but omnipotence itself is suited to obviate those innumerable disconsolations that we are obnoxious unto. And those whose souls are pressed in earnest with them, and are driven from all the reliefs which not only carnal security and stout-heartedness in adversity do offer, but also from all those lawful diversions which the world can administer, will understand that true consolation is an act of the exceeding greatness of the power of God, and without which it will not be wrought.

2. The means and causes of their disconsolation direct unto the same spring of their comfort. Whatever the power of hell, of sin, and the world, separately or in conjunction, can effect, it is all levelled

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against the peace and comfort of believers. Of how great force and efficacy they are in their attempts to disturb and ruin them, by what various ways and means they work unto that end, would require great enlargement of discourse to declare; and yet when we have used our utmost diligence in an inquiry after them, we shall come short of a full investigation of them, yea, it may be, of what many individual persons find in their own experience. Wherefore, with respect unto one cause and principle of disconsolation, God declares that it is he who comforteth his people: Isa. li. 12–15, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail. But I am the LORD thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The LORD of hosts is his name." He sees it necessary to declare his infinite power, and to express in sundry instances the effects thereof.

Wherefore, if we take a view of what is the state and condition of the church in itself and in the world; how weak is the faith of most believers; how great their fears; how many their discouragements; as also with how great temptations, calamities, oppositions, persecutions, they are exercised; how vigorously and sharply these things are set on upon their spirits, according unto all advantages, inward and outward, that their spiritual adversaries can lay hold upon,—it will be manifest how necessary it was that their consolation should be intrusted with Him with whom infinite power doth always dwell. And if our own inward or outward peace seem to abate of the necessity of this consideration, it may not be amiss, by the exercise of faith herein, to lay in provision for the future, seeing we know not what may befall us in the world. And should we live to see the church in storms, as who knows but we may, our principal supportment will be, that our Comforter is of almighty power, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in operation.

Fourthly, This dispensation of the Spirit is unchangeable. Unto whomsoever he is given as a comforter, he abides with them for ever. This our Saviour expressly declares in the first promise he made of sending him as a comforter, in a peculiar manner: John xiv. 16, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever." The moment of this promise lieth in his unchangeable continuance with the church. There was, indeed, a present occasion rendering necessary this declaration of the

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unchangeableness of his abode; for in all this discourse our Saviour was preparing the hearts of his disciples for his departure from them, which was now at hand. And whereas he lays the whole of the relief which in that case he would afford unto them upon his sending of the Holy Ghost, he takes care not only to prevent an objection which might arise in their minds about this dispensation of the Spirit, but also in so doing to secure the faith and consolation of the church in all ages; for as he himself, who had been their immediate, visible comforter during the whole time of his ministry among them, was now departing from them, and that so as that "the heaven was to receive him until the times of restitution of all things," they might be apt to fear that this comforter who was now promised unto them might continue also only for a season, whereby they should be reduced unto a new loss and sorrow. To assure their minds herein, our Lord Jesus Christ lets them know that this other comforter should not only always continue with them, unto the end of their lives, work, and ministry, but abide with the church absolutely unto the consummation of all things. He is now given in an eternal and unchangeable covenant, Isa. lix. 21; and he can no more depart from the church than the everlasting sure covenant of God can be abolished.

But it may be objected by such as really inquire into the promises of Christ, and after their accomplishment, for the establishment of their faith, whence it is, that if the Comforter abide always with the church, so great a number of believers do in all ages spend, it may be, the greatest part of their lives in troubles and disconsolation, having no experience of the presence of the Holy Ghost with them as a comforter. But this objection is not of force to weaken our faith as unto the accomplishment of this promise; for,—

1. There is in the promise itself a supposition of troubles and disconsolations thereon to befall the church in all ages; for with respect unto them it is that the Comforter is promised to be sent. And they do but dream who fancy such a state of the church in this world as wherein it should be accompanied with such an assurance of all inward and outward satisfaction as scarce to stand in need of this office or work of the Holy Ghost; yea, the promise of his abiding with us for ever as a comforter is an infallible prediction that believers in all ages shall meet with troubles, sorrows, and disconsolation.

2. The accomplishment of Christ's promise doth not depend as to its truth upon our experience, at least not on what men sensibly feel in themselves under their distresses, much less on what they express with some mixture of unbelief. So we observed before, from that place of the prophet concerning the church, Isa. xl. 27, that "her way was hidden from the LORD, and her judgment passed over from her God;" as she complained also, "The LORD hath forsaken

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me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," chap. xlix. 14. But yet in both places God convinceth her of her mistake, and that indeed her complaint was but a fruit of unbelief; and so it is usual in great distresses, when persons are so swallowed up with sorrow or overwhelmed with anguish that they are not sensible of the work of the Holy Ghost in their consolation.

3. He is a comforter unto all believers at all times, and on all occasions wherein they really stand in need of spiritual consolation. But yet if we intend to have experience of his work herein, to have the advantage of it or benefit by it, there are sundry things required of ourselves in a way of duty. If we are negligent herein, it is no wonder if we are at a loss for those comforts which he is willing to administer. Unless we understand aright the nature of spiritual consolations, and value them both as sufficient and satisfactory, we are not like to enjoy them, at least not to be made sensible of them. Many under their troubles suppose there is no comfort but in their removal, and know not of any relief in their sorrows but in the taking away of their cause. At best they value any outward relief before internal supports and refreshments. Such persons can never receive the consolation of the Holy Spirit unto any refreshing experience. To look for all our comforts from him, to value those things wherein his consolations do consist above all earthly enjoyments, to wait upon him in the use of all means for the receiving of his influences of love and grace, to be fervent in prayer for his presence with us and the manifestation of his grace, are required in all those towards whom he dischargeth this office. And whilst we are found in these ways of holy obedience and dependence, we shall find him a comforter, and that for ever.

These things are observable in the office of the Holy Ghost, in general, as he is the comforter of the church, and [in] the manner of his discharge thereof. What is farther considerable unto the guidance of our faith, and the participation of consolation with respect hereunto, will be evident in the declaration of the particulars that belong thereunto.

CHAPTER III.

Unto whom the Holy Spirit is promised and given as a comforter, or the object of his acting in this office.

We have considered the promise of Christ to send the Holy Spirit to be the comforter of the church, and unto that end to abide with them for ever. The nature also of that office and work, in general, which hereon he undertakes and dischargeth, with the properties of

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them, have been declared. Our next inquiry is, unto whom this promise is made, and towards whom it is infallibly fulfilled. How and unto what ends, in what order, as unto his effects and operations, the Holy Spirit is promised unto any persons and received by them, hath been already declared in our former discourses, book iv. chap. iii.[1] We shall, therefore, here only declare in particular whom he is promised unto and received by as a comforter; and this is to all, and only unto, believers,—those who are actually so. All his operations required unto the making of them so to be are antecedent hereunto; for the promise of him unto this end, wherever it is recorded, is made directly unto them, and unto them it is confined. Immediately it was given unto the apostles, but it was not given unto them as apostles, but as believers and disciples of Christ, with a particular respect unto the difficulties and causes of disconsolation which they were under or should meet withal upon the account of their being so. See the promises unto this purpose expressly, John xiv. 16, 17, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7, 8. And it is declared withal that the world, which in that place is opposed unto them that do believe, cannot receive him, chap. xiv. 17. Other effectual operations he hath upon the world, for their conviction and the conversion of many of them; but as a Spirit of consolation he is neither promised unto them nor can they receive him, until other gracious acts of his have passed on their souls. Besides, we shall see that all his actings and effects as a comforter are confined unto them that believe, and do all suppose saving faith as antecedent unto them.

And this is the great fundamental privilege of true believers, whereby, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, they are exalted above all other persons in this world. And this will the more evidently appear when we shall consider those especial operations, acts, and effects, whereby consolation is administered unto them. That the life of man is the subject of innumerable troubles is made evident and uncontrollable by catholic experience. That "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," has been the constant acknowledgment of all that have been wise in all ages. And those who have designed to drown the sense of them in security and sensuality of life have been ever looked on as greatly exorbitant from the principles of nature and dictates of reason, voluntarily degenerating into the condition of creatures brutish and irrational. Others, who will not forego the privilege of their being, have always made it a principal inquiry how or whence they might take and receive relief and comfort for their supportment against their unavoidable troubles, sorrows, and disconsolation; yea, it is natural and necessary unto all men so to do. All men cannot but seek after rest and peace, not only

[1] See the previous volume of his works.—Ed.

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out of choice but instinct of nature, trouble and sorrow being diametrically contrary unto it in its being, and tending unto its dissolution. Wherefore, they all naturally seek for consolation. Hence the best and most useful part of the old philosophy consisted in the prescription of the ways and means of comforting and supporting the minds of men against things noxious and grievous to nature, with the sorrows which ensue thereon; and the topics they had found out unto this purpose were not to be despised where men are destitute of spiritual light and supernatural revelation. Neither did the wisdom or reason of man ever arise unto any thing more useful in this world than to discover any rational considerations that might allay the sorrows or relieve the minds of them that are disconsolate: for things that are really grievous unto the generality of mankind do outweigh all the real satisfaction which this life and world can afford; and to place either satisfaction or relief in the pursuit of sensual lusts is brutish. But yet what did all the spring and wellheads of rational and philosophical consolation rise unto? what refreshment did their streams afford? The utmost they attained unto was but to confirm and make obstinate the minds of men in a fancy, an opinion, or persuasion, contrary unto what they felt and had experience of; for what they contended for was but this, that the consideration of the common lot of mankind, the unavoidableness of grieving accidents, the shortness of human life, the true exercise of reason upon more noble objects, with others of the like nature, should satisfy men that the things which they endured were not evil or grievous.

But what doth all this amount unto in comparison of this privilege of believers, of this provision made for them in all their disconsolations, by Him in whom they do believe? This is a relief that never entered into the heart of man to think of or conceive. Nor can it be understood by any but those by whom it is enjoyed; for the world, as our Saviour testifies, neither knoweth this Spirit nor can receive him;—and, therefore, what is spoken of him and this work of his is looked on as a fancy or the shadow of a dream. And although the Sun of Righteousness be risen in this matter, and shines on all that dwell in the land of Goshen, yet those that abide still in Egypt make use only of their lanterns. But those who are really partakers of this privilege do know in some measure what they do enjoy, although they are not able to comprehend it in its excellency, nor value it in a due manner; for how can the heart of man, or our poor weak understandings, fully conceive this glorious mystery of sending the Holy Ghost to be our comforter? Only they receive it by faith, and have experience of it in its effects. There is, in my judgment, an unspeakable privilege of those who are believers, antecedent unto their believing, as they are elect,—namely, that Christ

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died in their stead alone. But this is like the wells which Isaac's servants digged, that the Philistines strove about as those which belonged unto them, which, though fresh, useful springs in themselves, caused them to be called Esek and Sitnah, [that is, contention and hatred.] Mighty strivings there are to break down the enclosure of this privilege, and lay it common unto all the world, that is, indeed, waste and useless; for it is contended that the Lord Christ died equally for all and every one of mankind, for believers and unbelievers, for those that are saved and those that are damned. And to this purpose many pretences are pleaded to show how the most of them for whom Christ died have no real benefit by his death, nor is any thing required in them to evidence that they have an interest therein. But this privilege we now treat of is like the well Rehoboth [that is, room]; Isaac kept it unto himself, and the Philistines strove not about it. None contend that the Spirit is a comforter unto any but believers; therefore is it by the world despised and reproached, because they have no interest in it, nor have the least pretence to strive about it. Did believers, therefore, duly consider how they are advanced hereby, through the love and care of Jesus Christ, into an inexpressible dignity above the residue of mankind, they would more rejoice in it than in all that this world can supply them withal. But we must proceed.

It appears, from what hath been discoursed, that this is not the first saving work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men. Regeneration and habitual sanctification do always precede it. He comforteth none but those whom he hath before sanctified. Nor are any other but such capable of his consolations; there is nothing in them that can discern his acting, or value what he doth of this kind. And this is the true reason why the whole work of the Holy Spirit as a comforter, wherein consists the accomplishment of the most glorious promise that ever Christ made to his church, and the greatest evidence of his continued care thereof, is so neglected, yea, despised, amongst the generality of professed Christians;—a great evidence of the apostatized state of Christianity. They can have no concern in any work of his but in its proper order. If men be not first sanctified by him, they can never be comforted by him; and they will themselves prefer in their troubles any natural reliefs before the best and highest of his consolations; for however they may be proposed unto them, however they may be instructed in the nature, ways, and means of them, yet they belong not unto them, and why should they value that which is not theirs? The world cannot receive him. He worketh on the world for conviction, John xvi. 8, and on the elect for conversion, John iii. 8; but none can receive him as a comforter but believers. Therefore is this whole work of the Holy

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Spirit little taken notice of by the most, and despised by many. Yet is it nevertheless glorious in itself, being fully declared in the Scripture, nor the less useful to the church, being testified unto by the experience of them that truly believe.

That which remaineth for the full declaration of this office and work of the Holy Ghost, is the consideration of those acts of his which belong properly thereunto, and of those privileges whereof believers are made partakers thereby. And whereas many blessed mysteries of evangelical truth are contained herein, they would require much time and diligence in their explanation. But as to the most of them, according unto the measure of light and experience which I have attained, I have prevented myself the handling of them in this place; for I have spoken already unto most of them in two other discourses, the one concerning the *perseverance of true believers*,[1] and the other of our *communion with God*,[2] and *of the Holy Spirit* in particular. As, therefore, I shall be sparing in the repetition of what is already in them proposed unto public view, so it is not much that I shall add thereunto. Yet what is necessary unto our present design must not be wholly omitted, especially seeing I find that farther light and evidence may be added unto our former endeavours in this kind.

CHAPTER IV.

Inhabitation of the Spirit the first thing promised.

THE first thing which the Comforter is promised for unto believers is, that he should dwell in them; which is their great fundamental privilege, and whereon all others do depend. This, therefore, must in the first place be inquired into.

The inhabitation of the Spirit in believers is among those things which we ought, as to the nature or being of it, firmly to believe, but as to the manner of it cannot fully conceive. Nor can this be the least impeachment of its truth unto any who assent unto the gospel, wherein we have sundry things proposed as objects of our faith which our reason cannot comprehend. We shall, therefore, assert no more in this matter but what the Scripture directly and expressly goeth before us in. And where we have the express letter of the Scripture for our warrant we are eternally safe, whilst we affix no sense thereunto that is absolutely repugnant unto reason or contrary unto more plain testimonies in other places. Wherefore, to make plain what we intend herein, the ensuing observations must be premised.

[1] Vol. xi. of the author's works. [2] Vol. ii.

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First, This personal inhabitation of the Holy Spirit in believers is distinct and different from his essential omnipresence, whereby he is in all things. Omnipresence is essential; inhabitation is personal. Omnipresence is a necessary property of his nature, and so not of him as a distinct person in the Trinity, but as God essentially, one and the same in being and substance with the Father and the Son. To be everywhere, to fill all things, to be present with them or indistant from them, always equally existing in the power of an infinite being, is an inseparable property of the divine nature as such; but this inhabitation is personal, or what belongs unto him distinctly as the Holy Ghost. Besides, it is voluntary, and that which might not have been; whence it is the subject of a free promise of God, and wholly depends on a free act of the will of the Holy Spirit himself.

Secondly, It is not a presence by virtue of a metonymical denomination, or an expression of the cause for the effect, that is intended. The meaning of this promise, "The Spirit shall dwell in you," is not "He shall work graciously in you," for this he can without any especial presence,—being essentially everywhere, he can work where and how he pleaseth without any especial presence;—but it is the Spirit himself that is promised, and his presence in an especial manner, and an especial manner of that presence, "He shall be in you, and dwell in you," as we shall see. The only inquiry in this matter is, whether the Holy Spirit himself be promised unto believers, or only his grace, which we shall immediately inquire into.

Thirdly, The dwelling of the person of the Holy Spirit in the persons of believers, of what nature soever it be, doth not effect a personal union between them. That which we call a personal union is the union of diverse natures in the same person; and there can be but one person by virtue of this union. Such is the hypostatical union in the person of the Son of God. It was our nature he assumed, and not the person of any. And it was impossible he should so assume any more but in one individual instance; for if he could have assumed another individual being of our nature, then it must differ personally from that which he did assume, for there is nothing that differs one man from another but a distinct personal subsistence of each. And it implies the highest contradiction that the Son of God could be hypostatically united unto more than one; for if they are more than one, they must be more persons than one; and many persons cannot be hypostatically united, for that is to be one person, and no more. There may be a manifold union, mystical and moral, of divers, of many persons, but a personal union there cannot be of any thing but of distinct natures. And as the Son of God could not assume many persons, so supposing that human nature which he did unite to himself to have been a person,—that is, to have had a

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distinct subsistence of its own antecedent unto its union,—and there could have been no personal union between it and the Son of God; for the Son of God was a distinct person, and if the human nature had been so too, there would have been two persons still, and so no personal union. Nor can it be said that although the human nature of Christ was a person in itself, yet it ceased so to be upon its union with the divine, and so two persons were conjoined and compounded into one: for if ever human nature have in any instance a personal subsistence of its own, it cannot be separated from it without the destruction and annihilation of the individual; for to suppose otherwise is to make it to continue what it was and not what it was; for it is what it is, distinct from all other individuals, by virtue of its personality. Wherefore, upon this inhabitation of the Spirit, whereinsoever it doth consist, there is no personal union ensuing between him and believers, nor is it possible that any such thing should be; for he and they are distinct persons, and must eternally abide so whilst their natures are distinct. It is only the assumption of our nature into union with the Son of God antecedent unto any individual personal subsistence of its own that can constitute such a union.

Fourthly, The union and relation that ensues on this inhabitation of the Spirit is not immediate between him and believers, but between them and Jesus Christ; for he is sent to dwell in them by Christ, in his name, as his Spirit, to supply his room in love and grace towards them, making use of his things in all his effects and operations unto his glory. Hence, I say, is the union of believers with Christ *by* the Spirit, and not *with* the Spirit himself; for this Holy Spirit dwelling in the human nature of Christ, manifesting and acting himself in all fulness therein, as hath been declared, being sent by him to dwell in like manner and act in a limited measure in all believers, there is a mystical union thence arising between them, whereof the Spirit is the bond and vital principle.

On these considerations, I say, it is the person of the Holy Ghost that is promised unto believers, and not only the effects of his grace and power; and his person it is that always dwelleth in them. And as this, on the one hand, is an argument of his infinite condescension in complying with this part of his office and work, to be sent by the Father and Son to dwell in believers; so it is an evident demonstration of his eternal deity, that the one and self-same person should at the same time inhabit so many thousands of distinct persons as are or were at any time of believers in the world,—which is fondness to imagine concerning any one that is not absolutely infinite. And, therefore, that which some oppose as unmeet for him, and beneath his glory, namely, this his inhabitation in the saints of God, is a most illustrious and incontrollable demonstration of his eternal glory: for

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none but he who is absolutely immense in his nature and omnipresence can be so present with and indistant from all believers in the world; and none but he whose person, by virtue of his nature, is infinite, can personally equally inhabit in them all. An infinite nature and person is required hereunto. And in the consideration of the incomprehensibility thereof are we to acquiesce as to the manner of his inhabitation, which we cannot conceive.

1. There are very many promises in the Old Testament that God would thus give the Holy Spirit in and by virtue of the new covenant, as Ezek. xxxvi. 27, Isa. lix. 21, Prov. i. 23. And in every place God calls this promised Spirit, and as promised, his Spirit, "My Spirit;" which precisely denotes the person of the Spirit himself. It is generally apprehended, I confess, that in these promises the *Holy Spirit* is intended only as unto his gracious effects and operations, but not as to any *personal inhabitation*. And I should not much contend upon these promises only, although in some of them his person, as promised, be expressly distinguished from all his gracious effects, but that the exposition which is given of them in their accomplishment under the New Testament will not allow us so to judge of them; for,—

2. We are directed to *pray for the Holy Spirit*, and assured that God will give him unto them that ask of him in a *due manner*, Luke xi. 13. If these words must be expounded metonymically, and not properly, it must be because either,—(1.) They agree not in the letter with other testimonies of Scripture; or, (2.) contain some sense absurd and unreasonable; or, (3.) that which is contrary unto the experience of them that believe. The first cannot be said, for other testimonies innumerable concur with it; nor the second, as we shall show; and as for the third, it is that whose contrary we prove. What is it that believers intend in that request? I suppose I may say that there is no one petition wherein they are more intense and earnest, nor which they more frequently insist upon. As David prayed that "God would not take his Holy Spirit from him," Ps. li. 11, so do they that God would bestow him on them; for this they do, and ought to do, even after they have received him. His continuance with him, his evidencing and manifestation of himself in and to them, are the design of their continual supplications for him. Is it merely external operations of the Spirit in grace that they desire herein? Do they not always pray for his ineffable presence and inhabitation? Will any thoughts of grace or mercy relieve or satisfy them if once they apprehend that the Holy Spirit is not in them or doth not dwell with them? Although they are not able to form any conception in their minds of the manner of his presence and residence in them, yet is it that which they pray for, and with-

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out the apprehension whereof by faith they can have neither peace nor consolation. The promise hereof being confined unto believers, those that are truly and really so, as we showed before, it is their experience whereby its accomplishment is to be judged, and not the presumption of such by whom both the Spirit himself and his whole work is despised.

3. And this inhabitation is that which principally our Lord Jesus Christ directeth his disciples to expect in the promise of him: "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," John xiv. 17. He doth so who is the "Comforter;" or, as it is emphatically expressed, chap. xvi. 13, "The Spirit of truth." He is promised unto and he inhabits them that do believe. So it is expressly affirmed towards all that are partakers of this promise: Rom. viii. 9, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Verse 11, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." "The Holy Spirit dwelleth in us," 2 Tim. i. 14. "Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. And many other express testimonies there are unto the same purpose. And whereas the subject of these promises and propositions is the Holy Ghost himself, the person of the Holy Ghost, and that so expressed as not to leave any pretence for any thing else, and not his person, to be intended; and whereas nothing is ascribed unto him that is unreasonable, inconvenient unto him in the discharge of his office, or inconsistent with any of his divine perfections, but rather what is every way suitable unto his work, and evidently demonstrative of his divine nature and subsistence,—it is both irrational and unsuitable unto the economy of divine grace to wrest these expressions unto a lower, meaner, figurative signification. And I am persuaded that it is contrary to the faith of the catholic church of true believers so to do: for however some of them may not have exercised their minds about the manner of the abode of the Holy Spirit with the church; and some of them, when they hear of his personal indwelling, wherein they have not been duly instructed, do fear, it may be, that indeed that cannot be which they cannot comprehend, and that some evil consequences may ensue upon the admittance of it, although they cannot say what they are; yet it is with them all even an article of faith that the "Holy Ghost dwelleth in the church,"—that is, in them that truly believe,—and herein have they an apprehension of such a personal presence of his as they cannot conceive. This, therefore, being so expressly, so frequently affirmed in the Scripture, and the comfort of the church, which depends thereon, being singular and eminent, it is unto me an important article of evangelical truth.

4. Although all the principal actings of the Holy Spirit in us and

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towards us as a comforter do depend on this head, or flow from this spring of his inhabitation, yet, in the confirmation of its truth, I shall here name one or two by which itself is evidenced and its benefits unto the church declared:—

(1.) This is the spring of his gracious operations in us. So our Saviour himself declares: "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. The water here promised is the Holy Spirit, called the "gift of God," verse 10. This is evident from that parallel place, chap. vii. 38, 39, where this living water is plainly declared to be the Holy Ghost. And this water which is given unto any is to be *in him*, and there to *abide;* which is but a metaphorical expression for the *inhabitation of the Spirit*, for it is to be in him as a *well*, as a *living fountain*, which cannot be spoken of any gracious habit whatever. No quality in our minds can be a *spring of living water*. Besides, all gracious habits are effects of the operation of the Holy Spirit; and therefore they are not the *well* itself, but belong unto the springing of it up in living water. So is the Spirit in his *indwelling* distinguished from all his *evangelical operations* of grace, as the well is distinct from the streams that flow from it. And as it is natural and easy for a spring of living water to *bubble up* and put forth refreshing streams, so it belongs unto the consolation of believers to know how *easy* it is unto the Holy Spirit, how ready he is, on the account of his gracious inhabitation, to carry on and perfect the work of grace, holiness, and sanctification in them. And what instruction they may take for their own deportment towards him may be afterwards spoken unto. So in many other places is his presence with us (which we have proved to be by the way of gracious inhabitation) proposed as the cause and spring of all his gracious operations, and so distinct from them. So, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," Rom. v. 5; "The Spirit of God that dwelleth in you shall quicken your mortal bodies," chap. viii. 11; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," verse 16: which places have been elsewhere explained and vindicated.

(2.) This is the hidden spring and cause of that *inexpressible distance and difference* that is between believers and the rest of the world. Our apostle tells us that the "life" of believers is "hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. A blessed life they have whilst they are here, dead to the world, and as dead in the world,—a life that will issue in eternal glory! But no such thing appears, no lustre of it is cast abroad into the eyes of men. "True," saith the apostle, "for it is 'hid with Christ in God.'" It is so both in its causes, nature, operations, and means of preservation. But by this hidden life it is that they

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are differenced from the perishing world. And it will not be denied, as I suppose, that this difference is real and great; for those who believe do enjoy the especial love and favour of God, whereas those who do not are "under the curse," and "the wrath of God abideth on them." They are "alive unto God," but these are "dead in trespasses and sins." And if men will not believe that there is so inexpressible a difference between them in this world, they will be forced to confess it at the last day, when the decretory sentences of, "Come, ye blessed," and "Go, ye cursed," shall be openly denounced. But, for the most part, there is no visible cause in the eyes of the world of this inexpressible and eternal difference between these two sorts of persons; for besides that, for the most part, the world doth judge amiss of all that believers are and do, and doth rather, through an inbred enmity, working by wicked and foolish surmises, suppose them to be the worst than absolutely the best of men, there is not, for the most part, such a visible, manifest difference in outward actions and duties,—on which alone a judgment may be passed in man's day,—as to be a just foundation of believing so unspeakable a difference between their persons as is spoken of. There is a difference in their works, which indeed ought to be far greater than it is, and so a greater testimony is given to the righteousness of God, 1 John iii. 12; there is yet a greater difference in internal, habitual grace, whereby the minds of believers are transformed initially into the image of God, Tit. i. 15;—but these things will not bear the weight of this inconceivable distance. Principally, therefore, it depends hereon,—namely, the inhabitation of the Spirit in them that believe. The great difference between the two houses that Solomon built was, that God dwelt in the one, and he himself in the other. Though any two houses, as unto their outward fabric, make the same appearance, yet if the king dwell in the one and a robber in the other, the one may be a palace and the other a den. It is this inhabitation of the Spirit whereon all the privileges of believers do immediately depend, and all the advantages which they have above the men of the world. And the difference which is made hereby or ensueth hereon is so inconceivably great, as that a sufficient reason may thence be given of all the excellent things which are spoken of them who are partakers of it.

CHAPTER V.

Particular actings of the Holy Spirit as a comforter—How he is an unction.

THE especial actings of the Holy Spirit towards believers as their comforter, with the privileges and advantages which by them they

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are made partakers of, have been severally spoken unto by many, and I have also in other discourses had occasion to treat concerning some of them. I shall, therefore, be the more brief in the present discourse of them, and, waiving things commonly known and received, shall endeavour to state right conceptions of them, and to add farther light unto what hath been already received.

The FIRST of this sort which we shall mention, because, as I think, the first in order of nature, is the *unction* or *anointing* which believers have by him. So are they said to be "anointed," 2 Cor. i. 21; and, 1 John ii. 20, "Ye have τὸ χρίσμα," an unction, an unguent, "from the Holy One." Verse 27, "The anointing which ye have received abideth in you;" and "the same anointing teacheth you of all things." What this χρίσμα is which we do receive, and wherein this anointing doth consist, we must, in the first place, inquire; for a distinct comprehension and knowledge of that which is so great a privilege, and of so much use unto us, is our duty and advantage. It is the more so, because by the most these things are neglected. That is an empty sound unto them which hath in itself the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Some things there are which pretend unto this unction, or which some would have it to consist in, that we must remove out of our way, to render the truth more evident.

First, Some think that by this "unction" the doctrine of the gospel, or the truth itself, is intended. This Episcopius pleads for in his exposition of the place. That doctrine of the gospel which they had received was that which would preserve them from the seducers which in that place of the apostle, 1 John ii. 20, believers are warned to beware of. But neither the context nor the text will admit of this interpretation; for,—1. The thing itself in question was the doctrine of the gospel. This the seducers pretended to be on their side, which the apostle denies. Now, although the doctrine itself was that whereby this difference was to be determined, yet is not the doctrine itself, but the advantage they had for the right understanding of it, that which is proposed for their relief and comfort. 2. This unction is said to "abide in them" who have received it; whereas we are said to abide in the doctrine or the truth, and not that in us properly. 3. This unction is said to "teach us all things," but the doctrine of the truth is that which we are taught, and there must be a difference between that which teacheth and that which is taught thereby. 4. Whereas, in all other places of the Scripture, either the Holy Ghost himself or some especial operation of his is hereby intended, there is no reason nor pretence of any to be taken from the words or context why another signification should be here imposed on that expression. 5. For the reason which he adds, that "there is no men-

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tion in any other place of Scripture of any peculiar internal act or work towards any persons, in their teaching or reception of the truth," it is so extremely remote from the truth, and is so directly opposite unto express testimonies almost innumerable, that I wonder how any man could be so forgetful as to affirm it. Let the reader satisfy himself in what hath been discoursed on the head of spiritual illumination.

Secondly, The testimony given by the Holy Ghost unto the truth of the gospel imparted unto them, is the exposition of this "unction" in the paraphrase of another. This testimony was by his miraculous operations, at his first effusion on the apostles. But neither can this be the mind of the Holy Ghost herein; for this unction which believers had is the same with their being anointed of God, 2 Cor. i. 21, and that was a privilege whereof they were all personally made partakers. So, also, is that which is here mentioned,—namely, that which was "in them," which "abode with them," and "taught them." Neither is this a tolerable exposition of these words, "'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, abiding in you, teaching of you;' that is, Ye have heard of the miraculous operations of the Holy Ghost, in the confirmation of the gospel, giving testimony unto the truth."

Thirdly, It is to no purpose to examine the pretences of some of the Romanists, that respect is had herein to the chrism or unguent that they use in baptism, confirmation, and in their fictitious sacraments of order and extreme unction; for besides that all their unctions are inventions of their own, no institution of Christ, nor of any efficacy unto the ends for which this unction is granted unto believers, the more sober of their expositors take no notice of them on this occasion. Those who would know what respect they have thereunto may find it in the commentaries of [Cornelius] à Lapide on this place.

These apprehensions being removed, as no way suiting the mind of the Holy Ghost, nor expressing the privilege intended, nor the advantage which we have thereby, we shall follow the conduct of the Scripture in the investigation of the true nature of it. And to this end we may observe,—

1. That all persons and things that were dedicated or consecrated unto God under the Old Testament were anointed with material oil. So were the kings of the people of God, so were priests and prophets. In like manner, the sanctuary, the altar, and all the holy utensils of divine worship, were anointed. And it is confessed that among all the rest of the Mosaical institutions, those also concerning unction were typical and figurative of what was to come.

2. That all these types had their first, proper, and full signification and accomplishment in the person of Jesus Christ. And because every person and thing that was made holy to God was so

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anointed, he who was to be the "Most Holy," the only spring and cause of holiness in and unto others, had his name and denomination from thence. Both *Messiah* in the Old Testament, and *Christ* in the New, are as much as the *Anointed One;* for he was not only in his person typified in the anointed kings, priests, and prophets, but also, in his mediation, by the tabernacle, sanctuary, altar, and temple. Hence his unction is expressed in these words, לִמְשֹׁחַ קֹדֶשׁ קָדָשִׁים, Dan. ix. 24, "To anoint the Holy of Holies," who was prefigured by all the holy anointed ones before. This became his name as he was the hope of the church under the Old Testament, *the Messiah;* and as the immediate object of the faith of the saints under the New, *the Christ.* Here, therefore, in the first place, we must inquire into the nature of this unction, that of believers being an emanation from thence, and to be interpreted by analogy thereunto; for (as it is usually expressed by way of allusion) it is as the oil, which, being poured on the head of Aaron, went down to the skirts of his garments.

3. That the Lord Christ was anointed, and how, is declared, Isa. lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me." His unction consisted principally in the communication of the Spirit unto him; for he proves that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, because he was anointed. And this gives us a general rule, that the anointing with material oil under the Old Testament did prefigure and represent the effusion of the Spirit under the New, which now answers all the ends of those typical institutions. Hence the gospel, in opposition unto them all, in the letter, outwardly, visibly, and materially, is called the "ministration of the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 6, 8. So is the unction of Christ expressed, Isa. xi. 2, "The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."

4. Whereas the unction of Christ did consist in the full communication of the Spirit unto him, not by measure, in all his graces and gifts, needful unto his human nature or his work, though it be essentially one entire work, yet was it carried on by several degrees and distinctions of time; for,—(1.) He was anointed by the Spirit in his incarnation in the womb, Luke i. 35; the nature of which work we have at large before explained. (2.) He was so at his baptism and entrance into his public ministry, when he was anointed to preach the gospel, as Isa. lxi. 1: "The Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him," Matt. iii. 16. The first part of his unction more peculiarly respected a fulness of the grace, the latter of the gifts of the Spirit. (3.) He was peculiarly anointed unto his death and sacrifice in that divine act of his whereby he "sanctified himself" thereunto, John xvii. 19, which hath also been before de-

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clared. (4.) He was so at his ascension, when he received of the Father the promise of the Spirit, pouring him forth on his disciples, Acts ii. 33. And in this latter instance he was "anointed with the oil of gladness," which includes his glorious exaltation also: for this was absolutely peculiar unto him, whence he is said to be so anointed "above his fellows;" for although in some other parts of this anointing, he hath them who partake of them, by and from him, in their measure, yet in *this* of receiving the Spirit with a power of communicating him unto others, herein he is singular, nor was ever any other person sharer with him therein in the least degree. See the Exposition on Heb. i. 8, 9. Now, although there be an inconceivable difference and distance between the unction of Christ and that of believers, yet is his the only rule of the interpretation of theirs, as to the kind thereof. And,—

5. Believers have their unction immediately from Christ. So is it in the text: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One." So is he called, Acts iii. 14; Rev. iii. 7, "These things saith he that is holy." He himself was anointed as the "Most Holy," Dan. ix. 24. And it is his Spirit which believers do receive, Eph. iii. 16; Phil. i. 19. It is said that "he who anointeth us is God," 2 Cor. i. 21; and I do take God there personally for the Father, as the same name is in the verse foregoing: "All the promises of God in him," that is, in Christ, "are yea, and in him Amen." Wherefore, the Father is the original, supreme cause of our anointing; but the Lord Christ, the Holy One, is the immediate efficient cause thereof. This himself expresseth when he affirms that he will send the Spirit from the Father. The supreme donation is from the Father; the immediate collation, from the Son.

6. It is therefore manifest that the anointing of believers consisteth in the communication of the Holy Spirit unto them from and by Jesus Christ. It is not the Spirit that doth anoint us, but he is the unction wherewith we are anointed by the Holy One. This the analogy unto the unction of Christ makes undeniable: for as he was anointed so are they, in the same kind of unction, though in a degree inferior unto him; for they have nothing but a measure and portion from his fulness, as he pleaseth, Eph. iv. 7. Our unction, therefore, is the communication of the Holy Spirit, and nothing else. He is that unction which is given unto us, and abideth with us. But this communication of the Spirit is general, and respects all his operations. It doth not yet appear wherein the especial nature of it doth consist, and whence this communication of him is thus expressed by "an unction;" and this can be no otherwise learned but from the effects ascribed unto him as he is an unction, and the relation with the resemblance that is therein unto the unction of Christ.

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It is, therefore, some particular grace and privilege which is intended in this unction, 2 Cor. i. 21. It is mentioned only neutrally, without the ascription of any effects unto it, so that therein we cannot learn its especial nature. But there are two effects elsewhere ascribed unto it. The first is teaching, with a saving, permanent knowledge of the truth thereby produced in our minds. This is fully expressed 1 John ii. 20, 27, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things;" that is, "All those things of the fundamental, essential truths of the gospel, all ye need to know that ye may obey God truly and be saved infallibly, this ye have by this unction; for this anointing which ye have received abideth in you, and teacheth you all things." And we may observe, that it is spoken of in an especial manner with respect unto our permanency and establishment in the truth against prevalent seducers and seductions; so it is joined with establishing in that other place, 2 Cor. i. 21.

Wherefore, in the first place, this anointing with the Holy Ghost is the communication of him unto us with respect unto that gracious work of his in the spiritual, saving illumination of our minds, teaching us to know the truth, and to adhere firmly unto it in love and obedience. This is that which is peculiarly ascribed unto it; and we have no way to know the nature of it but by its effects.

The anointing, then, of believers with the Spirit consists in the collation of him upon them to this end, that he may graciously instruct them in the truths of the gospel by the saving illumination of their minds, causing their souls firmly to cleave unto them with joy and delight, and transforming them in the whole inward man into the image and likeness of it. Hence it is called the "anointing of our eyes with eye-salve that we may see," Rev. iii. 18. So doth it answer that unction of the Lord Christ with the Spirit, which made him "of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD," Isa. xi. 3. Let these things, therefore, be fixed in the first place,—namely, that the τὸ χρίσμα, the unction which believers receive from the Holy One, is the Spirit himself; and that his first, peculiar, especial effect as an unction, is his teaching of us the truths and mysteries of the gospel by saving illumination, in the manner before described.

Hereunto also is referred what is said of believers being made "kings and priests," Rev. i. 6; for there is an allusion therein unto the anointing of those sorts of persons under the Old Testament. Whatever was typical therein was fully accomplished in the unction of Christ unto his office, wherein he was the sovereign king, priest, and prophet of the church. Wherefore, by a participation in his unction, they are said to be made "kings and priests," or "a royal priesthood," as it is, 1 Pet. ii. 9; and this participation of his unction consists in the communication of the same Spirit unto them wherewith

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he was anointed. Whereas, therefore, these titles denote the dignity of believers in their especial relation unto God, by this unction they are peculiarly dedicated and consecrated unto him.

It is manifest, therefore, first, that this unction we receive from the Holy One is the Holy Spirit, which he hath promised unto all that believe in him; and then that we have these two things by virtue thereof:—1. Spiritual instruction, by saving illumination in the mind of God and the mysteries of the gospel; 2. An especial dedication unto God, in the way of a spiritual privilege.

What remains is, to inquire,—1. What benefit or advantage we have by this unction; 2. How this belongs unto our consolation, seeing the Holy Spirit is thus bestowed on us as he is promised to be the comforter of the church.

1. As unto the first head, it is hereon that our stability in believing doth depend; for it is pleaded unto this purpose in a peculiar manner by the apostle, 1 John ii. 20, 27. It was the "unction from the Holy One" which then kept believers from being carried from the faith by the craft of seducers. Hereby he makes men, according unto their measure, "of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD." Nor will any thing else give assurance in this case. Temptations may come as a storm or tempest, which will quickly drive men from their greatest fleshly confidences. Hence oftentimes those who are forwardest to say, though all men should forsake the truth, yet would not they so do, are the forwardest upon trials so to do. Neither will men's skill, cunning, or disputing abilities, secure them from being, at one time or other, inveigled with fair pretences, or entangled with the cunning sleights of them who lie in wait to deceive. Nor will the best defences of flesh and blood stand firmly and unshaken against powerful allurements on the one hand, and fierce persecutions on the other; the present artillery of the patrons and promoters of apostasy. None of these things doth the apostle prescribe or recommend unto believers as an effectual means of their preservation, when a trial of their stability in the truth shall befall them. But this unction he assures them will not fail; neither shall they fail, because of it.

And to this end we may consider,—(1.) The nature of the teaching which we have by this anointing: "The anointing teacheth you." It is not merely an external doctrinal instruction, but an internal effectual operation of the Holy Ghost. Herein doth God give unto us "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, that we may know what is the hope of his calling," Eph. i. 17, 18. He maketh use, indeed, of the outward means of instruction by the word, and teacheth nothing but what is revealed therein; but he gives us "an under-

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standing that we may know him that is true," and openeth our eyes that we may clearly and spiritually see the wondrous things that are in his law. And there are no teachings like unto his; none so abiding, none so effectual. When spiritual things, through this anointing, are discovered in a spiritual manner, then do they take up an immovable possession in the minds of men. As God will destroy every oppressing yoke because of the anointing of Christ Isa. x. 27, so will he break every snare of seduction by the anointing of Christians. So it is promised that under the gospel, "wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times," Isa. xxxiii. 6. Nothing will give stability in all seasons but the wisdom and knowledge which are the effects of this teaching, when God gives us "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."

(2.) What it is that it teacheth, and that is all things: "The same anointing teacheth you of all things." So was the promise that he should "teach us all things," and "bring all things to our remembrance" that Christ hath said unto us, John xiv. 26, and "guide us into all truth," chap. xvi. 13. It is not all things absolutely that are intended; for they are restrained unto those of one certain kind, even the things which Christ had spoken,—that is, such as belonged unto the kingdom of God. Neither are they all of *them* absolutely intended, especially as to the degrees of the knowledge of them; for in this life we know but in part, and see all things darkly as in a glass. But it is all things, and all truth, with respect unto the end of this promise and teaching. In the promise, the whole life of faith, with joy and consolation thereon, is the end designed. All things necessary thereunto this unction teacheth us. And in the other place of the apostle, it respects the great fundamental truths of the gospel, which the seducers opposed, from whose seduction this unction doth secure believers. Wherefore, it teacheth all that are made partakers of it all that truth, all those things, all that Christ hath spoken, that are necessary unto these ends, that they may live unto God in the consolation of faith, and be delivered from all attempts to draw them into error.

The degrees of this knowledge, which are exceeding various, both with respect unto the clearness and evidence of conception and the extent of the things known, depend on the various measures whereby the Spirit acteth, according unto his own will, and the different use of the external means of knowledge which we do enjoy; but what is necessary unto the ends mentioned, none shall come short of who enjoy this anointing. And where its teachings are complied withal in a way of duty, where we obstruct them not by prejudices and sloth, where we give up ourselves unto their directive efficacy in a diligent, impartial attendance unto the word, whereby alone we are to be taught, we shall not fail of that knowledge in the whole counsel

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of God, and all the parts of it, which he will accept and bless. And this gives stability unto believers when trials and temptations about the truth do befall them; and the want hereof, in the uncured darkness of their minds, and ignorance of the doctrine of the gospel, is that which betrays multitudes into a defection from it in seasons of temptation and persecution.

(3.) It so teacheth as to give withal an approbation of and love unto the things that are taught. These are the next principle and cause of practice, or the doing of the things that we know; which is the only cement of all the means of our security, rendering them firm and stable. The mind may discern spiritual truths, but if the will and affections be not wrought over to love them and delight in them, we shall never conform ourselves unto them in the diligent exercise and practice of what they do require. And what we may do on the solitary efficacy of light and conviction, without the adherence of love and delight, will neither be acceptable unto God, nor shall we be permanent or stable therein. All other means in the world, without the love and practice of the truth, will be insufficient unto our preservation in the saving profession of it. And this is the characteristical note of the teaching by this unction. It gives and communicates with it the love of that truth wherein we are instructed, and delight in obedience unto what it doth require. Where these are not, however raised our minds may be, or enlarged our understandings in the apprehension of objective truths, whatever sublime notions or subtile conceptions about them we may have, though we could master and manage all the speculations and niceties of the schools, in their most pretended accuracy of expression, yet as to the power and benefit of religion, we should be but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. But when this Holy Spirit doth, in and by his teaching, breathe into our hearts a holy, divine love unto and complacency in the things we are taught; when he enables us to taste how gracious the Lord is in them, rendering them sweeter unto us than the honey or the honey-comb; when he makes them our delight and joy, exciting and quickening the practical principles of our minds unto a compliance with them in holy obedience,—then have we that unction from the Holy One which will both sanctify and secure our souls unto the end.

And hereby may we know whether we have ourselves received of this anointing. Some would fain put it off unto what was peculiar unto the times of the apostles, and would suppose another kind of believers in those days than any that are now in the world, or need to be; though what our Saviour prayed for for them, even for the apostles themselves, as to the Spirit of grace and consolation, he prayed also for all them who should believe on him through their word unto

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the end of the world. But take away the promise of the Spirit, and the privileges thereon depending, from Christians, and in truth they cease so to be. Some neglect it as if it were an empty expression, and either wholly insignificant, or at best intending somewhat wherein they need not much concern themselves; and whatever it be, they doubt not but to secure the pretended ends of it, in their preservation from seduction, by their own skill and resolution. On such pretences are all the mysteries of the gospel by many despised, and a religion is formed wherein the Spirit of Christ hath no concernment. But these things are otherwise stated in the minds of the true disciples of Christ. They know and own of how great importance it is to have a share in this unction; how much their conformity unto Christ, their participation of him, and the evidence of their union with him, how much their stability in profession, their joy in believing, their love and delight in obedience, with their dignity in the sight of God and all his holy angels, do depend thereon. Neither do we look upon it as a thing obscure or unintelligible, that which no man can know whether he hath or no; for if it were so, a thing so thin, aërial, and imperceptible, as that no spiritual sense or experience could be had of it, the apostle would not have referred all sorts and degrees of believers, fathers, young men, and little children, unto it for their relief and encouragement in the times of danger. Wherefore, it evidenceth itself in the way and manner of its acting, operation, and teaching, as before declared. And as by those instances they satisfy themselves as unto what experience they have of it, so it is their duty to pray continually for its increase and farther manifestation of its power in them: yea, it is their duty to labour that their prayers for it may be both fervent and effectual; for the more express and eminent the teachings of this anointing in them are, the more fresh and plentiful is their unction, the more will their holiness and consolation abound.

And whereas this is that by which, as it immediately proceeds from the Holy Spirit, they have their peculiar dedication unto God, being made kings and priests unto him, they are highly concerned to secure their interest therein; for it may be they are so far from being exalted, promoted, and dignified in the world by their profession, as that they are made thereby the scorn of men and the outcasts of the people. Those, indeed, whose kingdom and priesthood, their dignity and honour in Christianity, their approximation unto God and Christ in a peculiar manner, consist in secular titles, honour, power, and grandeur, as it is in the Papacy, may content themselves with their chrism, or the greasy unction of their outward, ceremonious consecration, without much inquiry after or concern in this spiritual anointing; but those who get little or nothing in this world, that

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is, of the world, by their profession, but labour, pain, travail of soul and body, with scorns, reproaches, and persecutions, had need look after that which gives them a dignity and honour in the sight of God, and which brings in satisfaction and peace unto their own souls; and this is done by that anointing alone, whereby they are made kings and priests unto God, having honour before him, and a free, sacred access unto him.

2. I shall only add, that whereas we ascribe this anointing in a peculiar manner unto the Holy Ghost as the comforter of the church, we may easily discern wherein the consolation which we receive by it doth consist; for who can express that satisfaction, refreshment, and joy, which the mind is possessed with in those spiritual, effectual teachings, which give it a clear apprehension of saving truth in its own nature and beauty, and enlarge the heart with love unto it and delight in it? It is true, that the greatest part of believers are ofttimes either at such a loss as unto a clear apprehension of their own spiritual state, or so unskilled in making a right judgment of the causes and means of divine consolations, or so confused in their own experiences, or so negligent in their inquiries into these things, or so disordered by temptations, as that they receive not a refreshing sense of those comforts and joys which are really inseparable from this anointing: but still it is in itself that spring from whence their secret refreshments and supportments do arise; and there is none of them but, upon guidance and instruction, are able to conceive how their chiefest joys and comforts, even those whereby they are supported in and against all their troubles, are resolved into that spiritual understanding which they have into the mysteries of the will, love, and grace of God in Christ, with that ineffable complacency and satisfaction which they find in them, whereby their wills are engaged into an unconquerable constancy in their choice. And there is no small consolation in a due apprehension of that spiritual dignity which ensues hereon; for when they meet with the greatest troubles and the most contemptuous scorns in this world, a due apprehension of their acceptance with God, as being made kings and priests unto him, yields them a refreshment which the world knows nothing of, and which themselves are not able to express.

CHAPTER VI.

The Spirit a seal, and how.

SECONDLY, Another effect of the Holy Spirit as the comforter of the church is, that by him believers are sealed: 2 Cor. i. 21, 22,

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"He who anointed us is God, who hath also sealed us." And how this is done the same apostle declares, Eph. i. 13, "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." And chap. iv. 30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." In the first place, it is expressly said that we are sealed with the Spirit; whereby the Spirit himself is expressed as this seal, and not any of his especial operations, as he is also directly said himself to be the "earnest of our inheritance." In the latter, the words are, Ἐν ᾧ ἐσφραγίσθητε, "In whom," in and by the receiving of whom, "ye are sealed." Wherefore, no especial act of the Spirit, but only an especial effect of his communication unto us, seems to be intended hereby.

The common exposition of this sealing is taken from the nature and use of sealing among men, the sum whereof is this: Sealing may be considered as a natural or moral action,—that is, either with respect unto the act of it as an act, or with respect unto its use and end. In the first way, it is the communication of the character or image that is on the seal unto the thing that is sealed, or that the impression of the seal is set unto. In answer hereunto, the sealing of the Spirit should consist in the communication of his own spiritual nature and likeness unto the souls of believers; so this sealing should materially be the same with our sanctification. The end and use of sealing among men is twofold:—1. To give security unto the performance of deeds, grants, promises, testaments, and wills, or the like engaging significations of our minds. And in answer hereunto, we may be said to be sealed, when the promises of God are confirmed and established unto our souls, and we are secured of them by the Holy Ghost. But the truth is, this were to seal the promises of God, and not believers. But it is persons, and not promises, that are said to be sealed. 2. It is for the safe-keeping or preservation of that which a seal is set upon. So things precious and highly valuable are sealed up, that they may be kept safe and inviolable. So, on the other hand, when Job expressed his apprehension that God would keep an everlasting remembrance of his sin, that it should not be lost or out of the way, he saith, "his transgression was sealed up in a bag," chap. xiv. 17. And so it is that power which the Holy Ghost puts forth in the preservation of believers which is intended; and in this respect they are said to be "sealed unto the day of redemption."

These things have been spoken unto and enlarged on by many, so that there is no need again to insist upon them. And what is commonly delivered unto this purpose is good and useful in the substance of it, and I have on several occasions long since myself made use of them. But upon renewed thoughts and consideration, I can-

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not fully acquiesce in them; for,—1. I am not satisfied that there is such an allusion herein unto the use of sealing among men as is pretended; and if there be, it will fall out, as we see it hath done, that, there being so many considerations of seals and sealing, it will be hard to determine on any one in particular which is principally intended. And if you take in more, as the manner of the most is to take in all they can think of, it will be unavoidable that acts and effects of various kinds will be assigned unto the Holy Ghost under the term of sealing, and so we shall never come to know what is that one determinate act and privilege which is intended therein. 2. All things which are usually assigned as those wherein this sealing doth consist are acts or effects of the Holy Ghost upon us whereby he seals us, whereas it is not said that the *Holy Spirit seals us*, but that *we are sealed with him;* he is God's seal unto us.

All our spiritual privileges, as they are immediately communicated unto us by Christ, so they consist wholly in a participation of that head, spring, and fulness of them which is in him; and as they proceed from our union with him, so their principal end is conformity unto him. And in him, in whom all things are conspicuous, we may learn the nature of those things which, in lesser measure and much darkness in ourselves, we are made partakers of. So do we learn our unction in his. So must we inquire into the nature of our being sealed by the Spirit in his sealing also; for as it is said that "he who hath sealed us is God," 2 Cor. i. 21, 22, so of him it is said emphatically, "For him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27. And if we can learn aright how God the Father sealed Christ, we shall learn how we are sealed in a participation of the same privilege.

I confess there are variety of apprehensions concerning the act of God whereby Christ was sealed, or what it is that is intended thereby. Maldonate, on the place, reckons up ten several expositions of the words among the fathers, and yet embraceth no one of them. It is not suited unto my design to examine or refute the expositions of others, whereof a large and plain field doth here open itself unto us; I shall only give an account of what I conceive to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in that expression. And we may observe,—

First, That this is not spoken of Christ with respect unto his divine nature. He is, indeed, said to be the character of the person of the Father in his divine person as the Son, because there are in him, communicated unto him from the Father, all the essential properties of the divine nature, as the thing sealed receiveth the character or image of the seal. But this communication is by eternal generation, and not by sealing. But it is an external, transient act

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of God the Father on the human nature, with respect unto the discharge of his office; for it is given as the reason why he should be complied withal and believed on in that work: "Labour for that bread which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed." It is the ground whereon he persuades them to faith and obedience unto himself.

Secondly, It is not spoken of him with an especial respect unto his kingly office, as some conceive; for this sealing of Christ they would have to be his designation of God unto his kingdom, in opposition unto what is affirmed, verse 15, that the people designed to come and make him a king by force: for that is only an occasional expression of the sense of the people, the principal subject treated on is of a nobler nature. But whereas the people did flock after him, on the account of a temporal benefit received by him, in that they were fed, filled, and satisfied with the loaves which he had miraculously increased, verse 26, he takes occasion from thence to propose unto them the spiritual mercies that he had to tender unto them; and this he doth, in answer unto the bread that they had eaten, under the name of "meat," and "bread enduring to everlasting life," which he would give unto them. Under this name and notion of meat he did comprise all the spiritual nourishment, in his doctrine, person, mediation, and grace, that he had prepared for them. But on what grounds should they look for these things from him? how might it appear that he was authorized and enabled thereunto? In answer unto that inquiry he gives this account of himself, "For him hath God the Father sealed,"—namely, unto this end.

Thirdly, Wherefore the sealing of God unto this end and purpose must have two properties and two ends also annexed unto it:—1. There is in it a communication of authority and ability; for the inquiry is, how he could give them that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, as afterwards they ask expressly, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" verse 52. To this it is answered, that God the Father had *sealed him;* that is, he it was who was enabled of God the Father to give and dispense the spiritual food of the souls of men. This, therefore, is evidently included in this sealing. 2. It must have evidence in it also,—that is, somewhat whereby it may be evinced that he was thus authorized and enabled by God the Father; for whatever authority or ability any one may have unto any end, none is obliged to make application unto him for it, or depend upon him therein, unless it be evidenced that he hath that authority and ability. This the Jews immediately inquired after. "What sign," say they, "showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?" verse 30;—"How shall it be demonstrated unto us that thou art authorized and enabled to give us the spiritual food of

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our souls?" This also belonged unto his sealing; for therein there was such an express representation of divine power communicated unto him as evidently manifested that he was appointed of God unto this work. These two properties, therefore, must be found in this sealing of the Lord Christ with respect unto the end here mentioned,—namely, that he might be the *promus condus*, or principal dispenser of the spiritual food of the souls of men.

Fourthly, It being God's seal, it must also have two ends designed in it:—1. God's owning of him to be his. "Him hath God the Father sealed," unto this end, that all may know and take notice of his owning and approbation of him. He would have him not looked on as one among the rest of them that dispensed spiritual things, but as him whom he had singled out and peculiarly marked for himself. And therefore this he publicly and gloriously testified at the entrance, and again a little before the finishing, of his ministry: for upon his baptism there came "a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17; which was nothing but a public declaration that this was he whom God had sealed, and so owned in a peculiar manner. And this testimony was afterward renewed again, at his transfiguration on the mount: chap. xvii. 5, "Behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him;"—"This is he whom I have sealed." And this testimony is pleaded by the apostle Peter as that whereinto their faith in him, as the sealed one of God, was resolved, 2 Pet. i. 17, 18. 2. To manifest that God would take care of him, and preserve him in his work unto the end, Isa. xlii. 1–4.

Fifthly, Wherefore, this sealing of the Son is the communication of the Holy Spirit in all fulness unto him, authorizing him unto, and acting his divine power in, all the acts and duties of his office, so as to evidence the presence of God with him, and his approbation of him, as the only person that was to distribute the spiritual food of their souls unto men: for the Holy Spirit, by his powerful operations in him and by him, did evince and manifest that he was called and appointed of God to this work, owned by him and accepted with him; which was God's sealing of him. Hence the sin of them who despised this seal of God was unpardonable; for God neither will nor can give greater testimony unto his approbation of any person than by the great seal of his Spirit, and this was given unto Christ in all the fulness of it. He was "declared to be the Son of God, according to the Spirit of holiness," Rom. i. 4; and "justified in the Spirit," or by his power evidencing that God was with him, 1 Tim. iii. 16. Thus did God seal the Head of the church with the Holy Spirit; and thence, undoubtedly, may we best learn how the members are sealed with the same Spirit, seeing we have all our measures out of his fulness,

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and our conformity unto him is the design of all gracious communications unto us.

Sixthly, Wherefore, God's sealing of believers with the Holy Spirit is his gracious communication of the Holy Ghost unto them, so to act his divine power in them as to enable them unto all the duties of their holy calling; evidencing them to be accepted with him both unto themselves and others, and asserting their preservation unto eternal salvation. The effects of this sealing are gracious operations of the Holy Spirit in and upon believers; but the sealing itself is the communication of the Spirit unto them. They are sealed with the Spirit. And farther to evidence the nature of it, with the truth of our declaration of this privilege, we may observe,—

1. That when any persons are so effectually called as to become true believers, they are brought into many new relations,—as, to God himself, as his children; unto Jesus Christ, as his members; unto all saints and angels in the families of God above and below, as brethren; and are called to many new works, duties, and uses, which before they knew nothing of. They are brought into a new world, erected by the new creation; and which way soever they look or turn themselves, they say, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." So it is with every one that is made a new creature in Christ Jesus, 2 Cor. v. 17. In this state and condition, wherein a man hath new principles put within him, new relations contracted about him, new duties presented unto him, and a new deportment in all things required of him, how shall he be able to behave himself aright, and answer the condition and holy station wherein he is placed? This no man can do of himself, for "who is sufficient for these things?" Wherefore,—

2. In this state God owns them, and communicates unto them his Holy Spirit, to fit them for their relations, to enable them unto their duties, to act their new principles, and every way to discharge the work they are called unto, even as their head, the Lord Christ, was unto his. God doth not now give unto them "the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7. And hereby doth God seal them; for,—

(1.) Hereby he gives his testimony unto them that they are his, owned by him, accepted with him, his sons or children,—which is his seal; for if they were not so, he would never have given his Holy Spirit unto them. And herein consists the greatest testimony that God doth give, and the only seal that he doth set, unto any in this world. That this is God's testimony and seal, the apostle Peter proveth, Acts xv. 8, 9; for on the debate of that question, whether God approved and accepted of the humble believers, although they observed not the rites of Moses, he confirmeth that he did with this

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argument: "God," saith he, "which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness." How did he do it? how did he set his seal to them as his? Saith he, "By giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us." Hereby God gives testimony unto them. And lest any should suppose that it was only the gifts and miraculous operations of the Holy Ghost which he had respect unto, so as that this sealing of God should consist therein alone, he adds, that his gracious operations also were no less an effect of this witness which God gave unto them: "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." This, therefore, is that whereby God giveth his testimony unto believers, namely, when he seals them with his Spirit, or by the communication of the Holy Spirit unto them. And this he doth in two respects; for,—

(2.) This is that whereby he giveth believers assurance of their relation unto him, of their interest in him, and of his love and favour to them. It hath been generally conceived that this sealing with the Spirit is that which gives assurance unto believers,—and so indeed it doth, although the way whereby it doth it hath not been rightly apprehended; and, therefore, none have been able to declare the especial nature of that act of the Spirit whereby he seals us, whence such assurance should ensue. But it is indeed not any act of the Spirit in us that is the ground of our assurance, but the communication of the Spirit unto us. This the apostle plainly testifieth. 1 John iii. 24, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." That God abideth in us and we in him is the subject-matter of our assurance. "This we know," saith the apostle; which expresseth the highest assurance we are capable of in this world. And how do we know it? Even "by the Spirit which he hath given us." But, it may be, the sense of these words may be, that the Spirit which God gives us doth, by some especial work of his, effect this assurance in us; and so it is not his being given unto us, but some especial work of his in us, that is the ground of our assurance, and consequently our sealing. I do not deny such an especial work of the Spirit as shall be afterward declared, but I judge that it is the communication of the Spirit himself unto us that is here intended; for so the apostle declares his sense to be, chap. iv. 13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in God, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." This is the great evidence, the great ground of assurance, which we have that God hath taken us into a near and dear relation unto himself, "because he hath given us of his Spirit," that great and heavenly gift which he will impart unto no others. And, indeed, on this one hinge depends the whole case of that assurance which believers are capable of: If the Spirit of God dwell in us, we are his; but "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he

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is none of his," Rom. viii. 9. Hereon alone depends the determination of our especial relation unto God. By this, therefore, doth God seal believers, and therein gives them assurance of his love; and this is to be the sole rule of your self-examination whether you are sealed of God or no.

(3.) Hereby God evidenceth them unto the world; which is another end of sealing. He marks them so hereby for his own as that the world cannot but in general take notice of them; for where God sets this seal in the communication of his Spirit, it will so operate and produce such effects as shall fall under the observation of the world. As it did in the Lord Christ, so also will it do in believers according unto their measure. And there are two ways whereby God's sealing doth evidence them unto the world. The one is by the effectual operation of the Spirit, communicated unto them both in gifts and graces. Though the world is blinded with prejudices, and under the power of a prevalent enmity against spiritual things, yet it cannot but discover what a change is made in the most of those whom God thus sealeth, and how, by the gifts and graces of the Spirit, which they hate, they are differenced from other men. And this is that which keeps up the difference and enmity that is in the world between the seeds; for God's sealing of believers with his Spirit evidenceth his especial acceptance of them, which fills the hearts of them who are acted with the spirit of Cain with hatred and revenge. Hence many think that the respect which God had unto the sacrifice of Abel was testified by some visible sign, which Cain also might take notice of; and that there was an ἐμπυρισμός, the kindling of his sacrifice by fire from heaven; which was the type and resemblance of the Holy Ghost, as hath been showed. All other causes of difference are capable of a composition, but this about the seal of God can never be composed. And that which followeth from hence is, that those who are thus sealed with the Spirit of God cannot but separate themselves from the most of the world; whereby it is more evidenced unto whom they do belong.

(4.) Hereby God seals believers unto the day of redemption or everlasting salvation; for the Spirit thus given unto them is, as we have showed already, to "abide with them for ever," as a "well of water in them, springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14, vii. 38.

This, therefore, is that seal which God grants unto believers, even his Holy Spirit, for the ends mentioned; which, according unto their measure, and for this work and end, answers that great seal of heaven which God gave unto the Son, by the communication of the Spirit unto him in all its divine fulness, authorizing and enabling him unto his whole work, and evidencing him to be called of God thereunto.

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CHAPTER VII.

The Spirit an earnest, and how.

THIRDLY, Again, the Holy Spirit, as thus communicated unto us, is said to be an "earnest." Ἀῤῥαβών, the word in the original, is nowhere used in the New Testament but in this matter alone, 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5; Eph. i. 14. The Latin translator renders this word by *pignus*, a pledge; but he is corrected therein by Hierom on Eph. i. "Pignus," saith he, "Latinus interpres pro arrhabone posuit. Non id ipsum autem arrhabo quod pignus sonat. Arrhabo enim futuræ emptioni quasi quoddam testimonium, et obligamentum datur. Pignus vero, hoc est ἐνέχυρον pro mutua pecunia apponitur, ut quum illa reddita fuerit, reddenti debitum pignus a creditore reddatur." And this reason is generally admitted by expositors; for a pledge is that which is committed to and left in the hand of another, to secure him that the money which is borrowed thereon shall be repaid, and then the pledge is to be received back again. Hence it is necessary that a pledge be more in value than the money received, because it is taken in security for repayment. But an earnest is a part only of what is to be given or paid, or some lesser thing that is given to secure somewhat that is more or greater in the same or another kind. And this difference must be admitted if we are obliged to the precise signification and common use of pledges and earnests among men, which we must inquire into. The word is supposed to be derived from the Hebrew עֵרָבוֹן; and the Latins make use of it also, *arrhabon* and *arrha*. It is sometimes used in other authors, as Plutarch in Galba: Ἐφθάκει προειληφὼς ἀῤῥαβῶσι μεγάλοις τὸν Ὀθίνιον. He prepossessed Obinius with great sums of money, as an earnest of what he would do afterward. Hesychius explains it by πρόδομα, a gift beforehand. As to what I apprehend to be the mind of the Holy Ghost in this expression, I shall declare it in the ensuing observations:—

First, It is not any act or work of the Holy Spirit on us or in us that is called his being an "earnest." It is he himself who is this earnest. This is expressed in every place where there is mention made of it: 2 Cor. i. 22, Δοὺς τὸν ἀῤῥαβῶνα τοῦ Πνεύματος·—"The earnest of the Spirit,"—that earnest which is the Spirit, or the Spirit as an earnest, as Austin reads the words, "Arrhabona Spiritum." Chap. v. 5, "Who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." The giving of this earnest is constantly assigned to be the act of God the Father, who, according to the promise of Christ, would send the Comforter unto the church. And in the other place, Eph. i. 14, it is expressly said that the Holy Spirit is the "earnest of our inheri-

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tance." Everywhere the article is of the masculine gender, ὃς ἐστιν ἀρραβών and Πνεῦμα, the Spirit, is of the neuter. Some would have it to refer unto Christ, verse 12. But as it is not unusual in Scripture that the subjunctive article and relative should agree in gender with the following substantive, as ὃς here doth with ἀρραβών, so the Scripture, speaking of the Holy Ghost, though Πνεῦμα be of the neuter gender, yet having respect unto the thing,—that is, the person of the Spirit,—it subjoins the pronoun of the masculine gender unto it, as John xiv. 26. Wherefore, the Spirit himself is the earnest, as given unto us from the Father by the Son. And this act of God is expressed by giving or putting him into our hearts, 2 Cor. i. 22. How he doth this hath been before declared, both in general and with respect in particular to his inhabitation. The meaning, therefore, of the words is, that God gives unto us his Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and to abide with us, as an earnest of our future inheritance.

Secondly, It is indifferent whether we use the name of an earnest or a pledge in this matter, and although I choose to retain that of an earnest, from the most usual acceptation of the word, yet I do it not upon the reason alleged for it, which is taken from the especial nature and use of an earnest in the dealings of men; for it is the end only of an earnest whereon the Holy Ghost is so called, which is the same with that of a pledge, and we are not to force the similitude or allusion any farther. For precisely among men, an earnest is the confirmation of a bargain and contract made on equal terms between buyers and sellers or exchangers. But there is no such contract between God and us. It is true, there is a supposition of an antecedent covenant, but not as a bargain or contract between God and us. The covenant of God, as it respects the dispensation of the Spirit, is a mere free, gratuitous promise; and the stipulation of obedience on our part is consequential thereunto. Again; he that giveth an earnest in a contract or bargain doth not principally aim at his own obligation to pay such or such a sum of money, or somewhat equivalent thereunto, though he do that also; but his principal design is to secure unto himself that which he hath bargained for, that it may be delivered up unto him at the time appointed. But there is nothing of this nature in the earnest of the Spirit, wherein God intends our assurance only, and not his own. And sundry other things there are wherein the comparison will not hold nor is to be urged, because they are not intended.

The general end of an earnest or a pledge is all that is alluded unto; and this is, to give security of somewhat that is future or to come. And this may be done in a way of free bounty as well as upon the strictest contract; as if a man have a poor friend or relation, he may, of his own accord, give unto him a sum of money, and

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bid him take it as a pledge or earnest of what he will yet do for him. So doth God, in a way of sovereign grace and bounty, give his Holy Spirit unto believers, and withal lets them know that it is with a design to give them yet much more in his appointed season; and here is he said to be an earnest. Other things that are observed, from the nature and use of an earnest in civil contracts and bargains between men, belong not hereunto, though many things are occasionally spoken and discoursed from them of good use unto edification.

Thirdly, In two of the places wherein mention is made of this matter, the Spirit is said to be an "earnest," but wherein, or unto what end, is not expressed, 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5. The third place affirms him to be an "earnest of our inheritance," Eph. i. 14. What that is, and how he is so, may be briefly declared. And,—

1. We have already manifested that all our participation of the Holy Spirit, in any kind, is upon the account of Jesus Christ, and we do receive him immediately as the Spirit of Christ; for "to as many as receive Christ, the Father gives power to become the sons of God," John i. 12. "And because we are sons, he sends forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts," Gal. iv. 6. And as we receive the Spirit from him, and as his Spirit, so he is given unto us to make us conformable unto him, and to give us a participation of his gifts, graces, and privileges.

2. Christ himself, in his own person, is the "heir of all things." So he was appointed of God, Heb. i. 2; and therefore the whole inheritance is absolutely his. What this inheritance is, what is the glory and power that is contained therein, I have at large declared in the exposition of that place.

3. Man by his sin had universally forfeited his whole right unto all the ends of his creation, both on the earth below and in heaven above. Death and hell were become all that the whole race of mankind had either right or title unto. But yet all the glorious things that God had provided were not to be cast away; an heir was to be provided for them. Abraham when he was old and rich had no child, and complained that his steward, a servant, was to be his heir, Gen. xv. 2–4; but God lets him know that he would provide another heir for him of his own seed. When man had lost his right unto the whole inheritance of heaven and earth, God did not so take the forfeiture as to seize it all into the hands of justice and destroy it; but he invested the whole inheritance in his Son, making him the heir of all. This he was meet for, as being God's eternal Son by nature; and hereof the donation was free, gratuitous, and absolute. And this grant was confirmed unto him by his unction with the fulness of the Spirit. But,—

4. This inheritance, as to our interest therein, lay under a for-

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feiture; and as unto us it must be redeemed and purchased, or we can never be made partakers of it. Wherefore, the Lord Christ, who had a right in his own person unto the whole inheritance by the free grant and donation of the Father, yet was to redeem it from under the forfeiture, and purchase the possession of it for us; hence is it called "The purchased possession." How this purchase was made, what made it necessary, by what means it was effected, are declared in the doctrine of our redemption by Christ, the price which he paid, and the purchase that he made thereby. And hereon the whole inheritance is vested in the Lord Christ, not only as unto his own person and his right unto the whole, but he became the great trustee for the whole church, and had their interest in this inheritance committed unto him also. No man, therefore, can have a right unto this inheritance, or to any part of it, not unto the least share of God's creation here below, as a part of the rescued or purchased inheritance, but by virtue of an interest in Christ and union with him. Wherefore,—

Fourthly, The way whereby we come to have an interest in Christ, and thereby a right unto the inheritance, is by the participation of the Spirit of Christ, as the apostle fully declares, Rom. viii. 14–17; for it is by the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of the Son, that we are made children. Now, saith the apostle, "If we are children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Children are heirs unto their father; and those who are children of God are heirs of that inheritance which God hath provided for his children, "heirs of God." And all the good things of grace and glory which believers are made partakers of in this world or that which is to come are called their "inheritance," because they are the effects of free, gratuitous adoption. They are not things that themselves have purchased, bargained for, earned, or merited, but an inheritance depending on and following solely upon their free, gratuitous adoption. But how can they become "heirs of God," seeing God hath absolutely appointed the Son alone to be "heir of all things," Heb. i. 2; he was the heir, unto whom the whole inheritance belonged? Why, saith the apostle, by the participation of the Spirit of Christ we are made joint heirs with Christ. The whole inheritance, as unto his own personal right, was entirely his by the free donation of the Father, all power in heaven and earth being given unto him; but if he will take others into a joint right with him, he must purchase it for them, which he did accordingly.

Fifthly, Hence it is manifest how the Holy Spirit becomes the "earnest of our inheritance;" for by him, that is, by the communication of him unto us, we are made "joint heirs with Christ," which gives us our right and title, whereby our names are, as it were, inserted into the assured conveyance of the great and full inheritance

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of grace and glory. In the giving of his Spirit unto us, God making of us co-heirs with Christ, we have the greatest and most assured earnest and pledge of our future inheritance. And he is to be thus an earnest "until" or unto "the redemption of the purchased possession;" for after that a man hath a good and firm title unto an inheritance settled in him, it may be a long time before he can be admitted into an actual possession of it, and many difficulties he may have in the meantime to conflict withal. And it is so in this case. The "earnest of the Spirit" given unto us, whereby we become co-heirs with Christ, whose Spirit we are made partakers of, secures the title of the inheritance in and unto our whole persons; but before we can come unto the full possession of it, not only have we many spiritual trials and temptations to conflict withal in our souls, but our bodies also are liable unto death and corruption. Wherefore, whatever "first-fruits" we may enjoy, yet can we not enter into the actual possession of the whole inheritance, until not only our souls are delivered from all sins and temptations, but our bodies also are rescued out of the dust of the grave. This is the full "redemption of the purchased possession;" whence it is signally called the "redemption of the body," Rom. viii. 23.

Thus as the Lord Christ himself was made "heir of all things" by that communication of the Spirit unto him whereby he was anointed unto his office, so the participation of the same Spirit from him and by him makes us co-heirs with him; and so he is an earnest given us of God of the future inheritance. It belongs not unto my present purpose to declare the nature of that inheritance whereof the Holy Spirit is the earnest; in brief, it is the highest participation with Christ in that glory and honour that our natures are capable of.

And in like manner we are said to receive ἀπαρχὴν τοῦ Πνεύματος, Rom. viii. 23; that is, the Spirit himself as the first-fruits of our spiritual and eternal redemption. God had appointed that the first-fruits, which are called רֵאשִׁית and בִּכּוּרִים, should be a תְּרוּמָה, an offering unto himself. Hereunto ἀπαρχὴ answereth, and is taken generally for that which is first in any kind, Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 20; James i. 18; Rev. xiv. 4. And the "first-fruits of the Spirit" must be either what he first worketh in us, or all his fruits in us with respect unto the full harvest that is to come, or the Spirit himself as the beginning and pledge of future glory. And the latter of these is intended in this place; for the apostle discourseth about the liberty of the whole creation from that state of bondage whereunto all things were subjected by sin. With respect hereunto, he saith that believers themselves having not as yet obtained a full deliverance, as he had expressed it, Rom. vii. 24, do groan after its perfect accomplishment. But yet, saith he, we have the beginning of it, the

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first-fruits of it, in the communication of the Spirit unto us; for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17: for although we are not capable of the full and perfect estate of the liberty provided for the children of God whilst we are in this world, conflicting with the remainders of sin, pressed and exercised with temptations, our bodies also being subject unto death and corruption, yet where the Spirit of the Lord is, where we have that first-fruit of the fulness of our redemption, there is liberty in the real beginning of it, and assured consolation, because it shall be consummated in the appointed season.

These are some of the spiritual benefits and privileges which believers enjoy by a participation of the Holy Ghost as the promised comforter of the church. These things he is unto them; and as unto all other things belonging unto their consolation, he works them in them; which we must in the next place inquire into. Only, something we may take notice of from what we have already insisted on; as,—1. That all evangelical privileges whereof believers are made partakers in this world do centre in the person of the Holy Spirit. He is the great promise that Christ hath made unto his disciples, the great legacy which he hath bequeathed unto them. The grant made unto him by the Father, when he had done all his will, and fulfilled all righteousness, and exalted the glory of his holiness, wisdom, and grace, was this of the Holy Spirit, to be communicated by him unto the church. This he received of the Father as the complement of his reward; wherein he "saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied." This Spirit he now gives unto believers, and no tongue can express the benefits which they receive thereby. Therein are they anointed and sealed; therein do they receive the earnest and first-fruits of immortality and glory; in a word, therein are they taken into a participation with Christ himself in all his honour and glory. Hereby is their condition rendered honourable, safe, comfortable, and the whole inheritance is unchangeably secured unto them. In this one privilege, therefore, of receiving the Spirit, are all others inwrapped; for,—2. No one way, or thing, or similitude, can express or represent the greatness of this privilege. It is *anointing*, it is *sealing*, it is an *earnest* and *first-fruit*,—every thing whereby the love of God and the blessed security of our condition may be expressed or intimated unto us; for what greater pledge can we have of the love and favour of God, what greater dignities can we be made partakers of, what greater assurance of a future blessed condition, than that God hath given us of his Holy Spirit? And, 3. Hence also is it manifest how abundantly willing he is that the heirs of promise should receive strong consolation in all their distresses, when they flee for refuge unto the hope that is set before them.

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THE APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING DISCOURSE.

WITH respect unto the dispensation of the Spirit towards believers, and his holy operations in them and upon them, there are sundry particular duties, whereof he is the *immediate object*, prescribed unto them; and they are those whereby on our part we comply with him in his work of grace, whereby it is carried on and rendered useful unto us. Now, whereas this Holy Spirit is a *divine person*, and he acts in all things towards us as a *free agent*, according unto his own will, the things enjoined us with respect unto him are those whereby we may carry ourselves aright towards such an one, namely, as he is a *holy, divine, intelligent person*, working freely in and towards us for our good. And they are of two sorts, the first whereof are expressed in *prohibitions* of those things which are unsuited unto him and his dealings with us, the latter in *commands* for our attendance unto such duties as are peculiarly suited unto a compliance with him in his operations; in both which our obedience is to be exercised with a peculiar regard unto him. I shall begin with the first sort, and go over them in the instances given us in the Scripture:—

First, We have a negative precept to this purpose: Eph. iv. 30, Μὴ λυπεῖτε τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον,—"Grieve not the holy Spirit;"—"Consider who he is, what he hath done for you, how great your concern is in his continuance with you, and withal that he is a free, infinitely wise, and holy agent in all that he doth, who came freely unto you, and can withdraw from you; and grieve him not." It is the person of the Holy Spirit that is intended in the words, as appears,—1. From the manner of the expression, τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον,—"that holy Spirit." 2. By the work assigned unto him; for by him we are "sealed unto the day of redemption." Him we are not to "grieve." The expression seems to be borrowed from Isa. lxiii. 10, where mention is made of the sin and evil here prohibited: וַיַּמְּרוּ וְיָעִצְבוּ אֶת־רוּחַ קָדְשׁוֹ, —"But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit." עָצַב is to "trouble" and to "grieve;" and it is used when it is done unto a great degree. The LXX. render it here by παροξύνω which is so to grieve as also to irritate and provoke to anger and indignation, because it hath respect unto the rebellions of the people in the wilderness, which our apostle expresseth by παραπικραίνω and παραπικρασμός, words of the same signification. To "vex," therefore, is the heightening of grieving by a provocation unto anger and indignation: which sense is suited to the place and matter treated of, though the word signify no more but to "grieve;" and so it is rendered by λυπέω, Gen. xlv. 5; 2 Sam. xix. 2.

Now, grief is here ascribed unto the Holy Spirit as it is elsewhere

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unto God absolutely: Gen. vi. 6, "It repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Such affections and perturbations of mind are not ascribed unto God or the Spirit but metaphorically. That intended in such ascriptions is, to give us an apprehension of things as we are able to receive it; and the measure we take of them is their nature and effects in ourselves. What may justly grieve a good man, and what he will do when he is unjustly or undeservedly grieved, represent unto us what we are to understand of our own condition with respect unto the Holy Ghost when he is said to be grieved by us. And grief in the sense here intended is a trouble of mind arising from an apprehension of unkindness not deserved, of disappointments not expected, on the account of a near concernment in those by whom we are grieved. We may, therefore, see hence what it is we are warned of when we are enjoined not to grieve the Holy Spirit; as,—

1. There must be unkindness in what we do. Sin hath various respects towards God, of guilt, and filth, and the like. These several considerations of it have several effects. But that which is denoted when it is said to "grieve him" is unkindness, or that defect of an answerable love unto the fruits and testimonies of his love which we have received that it is accompanied withal. He is the Spirit of love; he is love. All his actings towards us and in us are fruits of love, and they all of them leave an impression of love upon our souls. All the joy and consolation we are made partakers of in this world arise from a sense of the love of God, communicated in an endearing way of love unto our souls. This requires a return of love and delight in all duties of obedience on our part. When instead hereof, by our negligence and carelessness, or otherwise, we fall into those things or ways which he most abhors, he greatly respects the unkindness and ingratitude which is therein, and is therefore said to be grieved by us.

2. Disappointment in expectation. It is known that no disappointment properly can befall the Spirit of God; it is utterly inconsistent with his prescience and omniscience. But we are disappointed when things fall not out according as we justly expected they would, in answer unto the means used by us for their accomplishment. And when the means that God useth towards us do not, by reason of our sin, produce the effect they are suited unto, God proposeth himself as under a disappointment. So he speaks of his vineyard: "I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes," Isa. v. 4. Now, disappointment causeth grief: as when a father hath used all means for the education of a child in any honest way or course, and expended much of his estate therein, if he, through dissoluteness or idleness, fail his expectation and

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disappoint him, it fills him with grief. They are great things which are done for us by the Spirit of God; these all of them have their tendency unto an increase in holiness, light, and love. Where they are not answered, where there is not a suitable effect, there is that disappointment that causeth grief. Especially is this so with respect unto some signal mercies. A return in holy obedience is justly expected on their account; and where this is not, it is a thing causing grief. This are we here minded of, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." So great a kindness should have produced other effects than those there mentioned by the apostle.

3. The concernment of the Holy Spirit in us concurs to his being said to be grieved by us; for we are grieved by them in whom we are particularly concerned. The miscarriages of others we can pass over without any such trouble. And there are two things that give us an especial concernment in others:—(1.) Relation, as that of a father, a husband, a brother. This makes us to be concerned in, and consequently to be grieved for, the miscarriages of them that are related unto us. So is it with the Holy Spirit. He hath undertaken the office of a comforter towards us, and stands in that relation to us. Hence he is so concerned in us as that he is said to be grieved with our sins, when he is not so at the sins of them unto whom he stands not in especial relation. (2.) Love gives concernment, and makes way for grief upon occasion of it. Those whom we love we are grieved for and by. Others may provoke indignation, but they cause not grief, I mean on their own account; for otherwise we ought to grieve for the sins of all. And what is the especial love of the Holy Ghost towards us hath been declared.

From what hath been spoken, it is evident what we are warned of, what is enjoined unto us, when we are cautioned not to grieve the Holy Spirit, and how we may do so; for we do it,—

(1.) When we are not influenced by his love and kindness to answer his mind and will in all holy obedience, accompanied with joy, love, and delight. This he deserves at our hands, this he expects from us. And when it is neglected, we are said to grieve him, because of his concernment in us; for he looks not only for our obedience, but also that it be filled up with joy, love, and delight. When we attend unto duties with an unwilling mind, when we apply ourselves unto any acts of obedience in a bondage or servile frame, we grieve him, who hath deserved other things of us.

(2.) When we lose and forget the sense and impression of signal mercies received by him. So the apostle, to give efficacy unto his prohibition, adds the signal benefit which we receive by him, in that he seals us to the day of redemption; which what it is, and wherein

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it doth consist, hath been declared. And hence it is evident that he speaks of the Holy Spirit as dwelling in believers; for as such he seals them. Whereas, therefore, in and by sin we forget the great grace, kindness, and condescension of the Holy Spirit in his dwelling in us, and by various ways communicating of the love and grace of God unto us, we may be well said to grieve him. And certainly this consideration, together with that of the vile ingratitude and horrible folly there are in neglecting and defiling his dwelling-place, with the danger of his withdrawing from us on the continuance of our provocation, ought to be as effectual a motive unto universal holiness and constant watchfulness therein as any that can be proposed unto us.

(3.) Some sins there are which in an especial manner above others do grieve the Holy Spirit. These our apostle expressly discourseth of, 1 Cor. vi. 15–20. And, by the connection of the words in this place, he seems to make "corrupt communication," which always hath a tendency unto corruption of conversation, to be a sin of this nature, Eph. iv. 29, 30.

Secondly, That which we have rendered to "vex him," Isa. lxiii. 10, is but the heightening and aggravation of his being grieved by our continuance, and, it may be, obstinacy, in those ways whereby he is grieved; for this is the progress in these things:—If those whom we are concerned in, as children or other relations, do fall into miscarriages and sins, we are first grieved by it. This grief in ourselves is attended with pity and compassion towards them, with an earnest endeavour for their recovery. But if, notwithstanding all our endeavours, and the application of means for their reducement, they continue to go on frowardly in their ways, then are we vexed at them, which includes an addition of anger and indignation unto our former sorrow or grief. Yet in this posture of things we cease not to attempt their cure for a season; which if it succeed not, but they continue in their obstinacy, then we resolve to treat with them no more, but to leave them to themselves. And not only so, but upon our satisfaction of their resolution for a continuance in ways of sin and debauchery, we deal with them as their enemies, and labour to bring them unto punishment. And for our better understanding of the nature of our sin and provocation, this whole scheme of things is ascribed unto the Holy Ghost with respect unto them. How he is said to be "grieved," and on what occasion, hath been declared. Upon a continuance in those ways wherewith he is grieved, he is said to be "vexed," that we may understand there is also anger and displeasure towards us. Yet he forsakes us not, yet he takes not from us the means of grace and recovery. But if we discover an obstinacy in our ways, and an untractable perverseness, then he will

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cast us off, and deal with us no more for our recovery; and woe unto us when he shall depart from us! So when the old world would not be brought to repentance by the dispensation of the Spirit of Christ in the preaching of Noah, 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, God said thereon that his Spirit should give over, and "not always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. Now, the cessation of the operations of the Spirit towards men obstinate in ways of sin, after he hath been long grieved and vexed, compriseth three things:—1. A subduction from them of the means of grace, either totally, by the removal of their light and candlestick, all ways of the revelation of the mind and will of God unto them, Rev. ii. 5; or as unto the efficacy of the word towards them, where the outward dispensation of it is continued, so that "hearing they shall hear, but not understand," Isa. vi. 9, John xii. 40: for by the word it is that he strives with the souls and minds of men. 2. A forbearance of all chastisement, out of a gracious design to heal and recover them, Isa. i. 5. 3. A giving of them up unto themselves, or leaving them unto their own ways; which although it seems only a consequent of the two former, and to be included in them, yet is there indeed in it a positive act of the anger and displeasure of God, which directly influenceth the event of things, for they shall be so given up unto their own hearts' lusts as to be bound in them as in "chains of darkness" unto following vengeance, Rom. i. 26, 28. But this is not all. He becomes at length a professed enemy unto such obstinate sinners: Isa. lxiii. 10, "They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." This is the length of his proceeding against obstinate sinners in this world. And herein also four things are included:—1. He comes upon them as an enemy, to spoil them. This is the first thing that an enemy doth when he comes to fight against any; he spoils them of what they have. Have such persons had any light or conviction, any gift or spiritual abilities, the Holy Spirit being now become their professed enemy, he spoils them of it all: "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have." Seeing he neither had nor used his gifts or talent unto any saving end, being now at an open enmity with him who lent it him, it shall be taken away. 2. He will come upon them with spiritual judgments, smiting them with blindness of mind and obstinacy of will, filling them with folly, giddiness, and madness in their ways of sin; which sometimes shall produce most doleful effects in themselves and others. 3. He will cast them out of his territories. If they have been members of churches, he will order that they shall be cut off, and cast out of them. 4. He frequently gives them in this world a foretaste of that everlasting vengeance which is prepared for them. Such are those horrors of conscience, and other terrible

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effects of an utter desperation, which he justly, righteously, and holily sends upon the minds and souls of some of them. And these things will he do, as to demonstrate the greatness and holiness of his nature, so also that all may know what it is to despise his goodness, kindness, and love.

And the consideration of these things belongs unto us. It is our wisdom and duty to consider as well the ways and degrees of the Spirit's departure from provoking sinners, as those of his approach unto us with love and grace.

These latter have been much considered by many, as to all his great works towards us, and that unto the great advantage and edification of those concerned in them; for thence have they learned both their own state and condition, as also what particular duties they were on all occasions to apply themselves unto; as in part we have manifested before, in our discourses about regeneration and sanctification.

And it is of no less concernment unto us to consider aright the ways and degrees of his departure, which are expressed to give us that godly fear and reverence wherewith we ought to consider and observe him. David on his sin feared nothing more than that God would take his holy Spirit from him, Ps. li. 11. And the fear hereof should influence us unto the utmost care and diligence against sin; for although he should not utterly forsake us,—which, as to those who are true believers, is contrary to the tenor, promise, and grace of the new covenant,—yet he may so withdraw his presence from us as that we may spend the remainder of our days in trouble, and our years in darkness and sorrow. "Let him," therefore, "that thinketh he standeth," on this account also "take heed lest he fall." And as for them with whom he is, as it were, but in the entrance of his work, producing such effects in their minds as, being followed and attended unto, might have a saving event, he may, upon their provocations, utterly forsake them, in the way and by the degrees before mentioned. It is therefore the duty of all to serve him with fear and trembling on this account. And,—

Secondly, It is so to take heed of the very entrances of the course described. Have there been such evils in any of us as wherein it is evident that the Spirit is grieved? as we love our souls, we are to take care that we do not vex him by a continuance in them. And if we do not diligently and speedily recover ourselves from the first, the second will ensue. Hath he been grieved by our negligence in or of duties, by our indulgence unto any lust, by compliance with or conformity to the world? let not our continuance in so doing make it his vexation. Remember that whilst he is but grieved, he continues to supply us with all due means for our healing and recovery:

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he will do so also when he is yet vexed; but he will do it with such a mixture of anger and displeasure as shall make us know that what we have done is an evil thing and a bitter. But have any proceeded farther, and continued long thus to vex him, and have refused his instructions, when accompanied, it may be, with sore afflictions or inward distresses, that have been evident tokens of his displeasure? let such souls rouse up themselves to lay hold on him, for he is ready to depart, it may be for ever. And,—

Thirdly, We may do well to consider much the miserable condition of those who are thus utterly forsaken by him. When we see a man who hath lived in a plentiful and flourishing condition, brought to extreme penury and want, seeking his bread in rags from door to door, the spectacle is sad, although we know he brought this misery on himself by profuseness or debauchery of life; but how sad is it to think of a man whom, it may be, we knew to have had a great light and conviction, to have made an amiable profession, to have been adorned with sundry useful spiritual gifts, and had in estimation on this account, now to be despoiled of all his ornaments, to have lost light, and life, and gifts, and profession, and to lie as a poor withered branch on the dunghill of the world! And the sadness hereof will be increased when we shall consider, not only that the Spirit of God is departed from him, but also is become his enemy, and fights against him, whereby he is devoted unto irrecoverable ruin.

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A DISCOURSE

OF

SPIRITUAL GIFTS.

CHAPTER I.

Spiritual gifts, their names and signification.

THE second part of the *dispensation of the Spirit* in order unto the perfecting of the new creation, or the edification of the church, consists in his *communication of spiritual gifts* unto the members of it, according as their places and stations therein do require. By his work of *saving grace* (which in other discourses we have given a large account of), he makes all the elect *living stones;* and by his communication of *spiritual gifts*, he fashions and builds those stones into a *temple for the living God* to dwell in. He spiritually unites them into one *mystical body*, under the Lord Christ as a *head of influence*, by faith and love; and he unites them into an *organical body*, under the Lord Christ as a *head of rule*, by gifts and spiritual abilities. Their *nature* is made one and the same by grace, their *use* is various by gifts. Every one is a part of the body of Christ, of the *essence* of it, by the same quickening, animating Spirit of grace; but one is an *eye*, another a *hand*, another a *foot*, in the body, by virtue of peculiar gifts: for "unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," Eph. iv. 7

These *gifts* are not saving, sanctifying graces; those were not so in themselves which made the most glorious and astonishing appearance in the world, and which were most eminently useful in the foundation of the church and propagation of the gospel, such as were those that were *extraordinary* and *miraculous*. There is something of the *divine nature* in the *least grace*, that is not in the most *glorious gift*, which is only so. It will therefore be part of our work to show wherein the essential difference between these *gifts* and sanctifying graces doth consist: as also, what is their nature and *use* must be inquired into; for although they are not grace, yet they are that without which the church cannot subsist in the world, nor can believers be useful unto one another and the rest of mankind,

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unto the glory of Christ, as they ought to be. They are the "powers of the world to come;" those effectual operations of the power of Christ whereby his kingdom was erected and is preserved.

And hereby is the church-state under the *new testament* differenced from that under the *old*. There is, indeed, a great difference between their *ordinances* and ours;—theirs being suited unto the dark apprehensions which they had of spiritual things; ours accommodated unto the clearer *light of the gospel*, more plainly and expressly representing heavenly things unto us, Heb. x. 1. But *our* ordinances with *their* spirit would be *carnal* also. The principal difference lies in the *administration of the Spirit* for the due performance of gospel worship by virtue of these gifts, bestowed on men for that very end. Hence the whole of *evangelical worship* is called the "ministration of the Spirit," and thence said to be "glorious," 2 Cor. iii. 8. And where they are neglected, I see not the advantage of the outward worship and ordinances of the gospel above those of the law; for although their institutions are accommodated unto that administration of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, yet they must lose their whole glory, force, and efficacy, if they be not dispensed and the duties of them performed by virtue of these *spiritual gifts*. And, therefore, no sort of men by whom they are neglected do or can content themselves with the pure and unmixed gospel institutions in these things, but do rest principally in the outward part of divine service, in things of their own finding out; for as *gospel gifts* are useless without attending unto *gospel institutions*, so *gospel institutions* are found to be fruitless and unsatisfactory without the attaining and exercising of *gospel gifts*.

Be it so, therefore, that these *gifts* we intend are not in themselves *saving graces*, yet are they not to be despised; for they are, as we shall show, the "powers of the world to come," by means whereof the kingdom of Christ is preserved, carried on, and propagated in the world. And although they are not grace, yet are they the great means whereby all grace is ingenerated and exercised; and although the *spiritual life* of the church doth not consist in them, yet the *order and edification* of the church depend wholly on them. And therefore are they so frequently mentioned in the Scripture as the great privilege of the New Testament, directions being multiplied in the writings of the apostles about their nature and proper use. And we are commanded earnestly to desire and labour after them, especially those which are most useful and subservient unto *edification*, 1 Cor. xii. 31. And as the neglect of *internal saving grace*, wherein the power of godliness doth consist, hath been the bane of Christian profession as to obedience, issuing in that form of it which is consistent with all manner of lusts; so the neglect of these *gifts*

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hath been the ruin of the same profession as to *worship* and *order*, which hath thereon issued in fond superstition.

The great and signal promise of the communication of these gifts is recorded, Ps. lxviii. 18, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men:" for these words are applied by the apostle unto that communication of *spiritual gifts* from Christ whereby the church was founded and edified, Eph. iv. 8. And whereas it is foretold in the psalm that Christ should *receive gifts*,—that is, to *give them unto men*, as that expression is expounded by the apostle,—so he did this by *receiving of the Spirit*, the proper cause and immediate author of them all, as Peter declares, Acts ii. 33, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear," speaking of the miraculous gifts conferred on the apostles at the day of Pentecost; for these gifts are from Christ, not as God absolutely, but as mediator, in which capacity he received all from the Father in a way of free donation. Thus, therefore, he received the *Spirit* as the author of all *spiritual gifts*. And whereas all the "powers of the world to come" consisted in them, and the whole work of the building and propagation of the church depended on them, the apostles, after all the instructions they had received from Christ, whilst he conversed with them in the days of his flesh, and also after his resurrection, were commanded not to go about the great work which they had received commission for until they had received power by the coming of the Holy Ghost upon them in the communication of those gifts, Acts i. 4, 8. And as they neither might nor could do any thing in their peculiar work, as to the laying of the foundation of the Christian church, until they had actually received those *extraordinary gifts* which gave them power so to do; so if those who undertake, in any place, degree, or office, to carry on the edification of the church, do not receive those more *ordinary gifts* which are continued unto that end, they have neither *right* to undertake that work, nor *power* to perform it in a due manner.

The things which we are to inquire into concerning these gifts are,—I. Their *name;* II. Their *nature* in general, and therein how they agree with and differ from saving graces; III. Their *distinction;* IV. The *particular nature* of them; and, V. Their use in the church of God.

The general *name* of those spiritual endowments which we intend is δόματα,—so the apostle renders מַתָּנוֹת, Eph. iv. 8, from Ps. lxviii. 18, *dona*, gifts; that is, they are free and undeserved effects of divine bounty. In the minds of men on whom they are bestowed, they are spiritual powers and endowments with respect unto a certain

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end; but as to their original and principal cause, they are *free, undeserved gifts.* Hence the Holy Spirit, as the author of them, and with respect unto them, is called Δωρεὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "The gift of God," John iv. 10. And the effect itself is also termed Δωρεὰ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος, "The gift of the Holy Ghost," Acts x. 45; "The gift of God," chap. viii. 20; "The gift of the grace of God," Eph. iii. 7; "The gift of Christ," chap. iv. 7; "The heavenly gift," Heb. vi. 4;—all expressing the freedom of their communication on the part of the Father, Son, and Spirit. And in like manner, on the same account, are they called χαρίσματα,—that is, "gracious largesses," gifts proceeding from mere bounty. And therefore *saving graces* are also expressed by the same name in general, because they also are *freely* and *undeservedly* communicated unto us, Rom. xi. 28. But those gifts are frequently and almost constantly so expressed, Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 7, vii. 7, xii. 4, 9, 28, 30; 2 Tim. i. 6; 1 Pet. iv. 10. And it is *absolute freedom* in the bestower of them that is principally intended in this name. Hence he hath left his name as a curse unto all posterity who thought this *free gift* of God might be "purchased with money," Acts viii. 20; a *pageantry* of which crime the apostate ages of the church erected, in applying the *name of that sin* to the *purchase of benefices and dignities,* whilst the *gift of God* was equally despised on all hands. And, indeed, this was that whereby in all ages countenance was given unto apostasy and defection from the power and truth of the gospel. The *names* of spiritual things were still retained, but applied to outward *forms* and *ceremonies;* which thereby were substituted insensibly into their room, to the ruin of the gospel in the minds of men. But as these gifts were not any of them to be *bought,* no more are they absolutely to be attained by the natural abilities and industry of any; whereby an *image* of them is attempted to be set up by some, but *deformed* and useless. They will do those things in the church by their own abilities which can never be acceptably discharged but by virtue of those *free gifts* which they despise; whereof we must speak more afterward. Now, the full signification of these words in our sense is peculiar unto the New Testament; for although in other authors they are used for a *gift* or *free grant,* yet they never denote the *endowments or abilities of the minds of men* who do receive them, which is their principal sense in the Scripture.

With respect unto their *especial nature* they are called πνευματικά, sometimes absolutely: 1 Cor. xii. 1, Περὶ δὲ τῶν πνευματικῶν, "But concerning spirituals,"—that is, *spiritual gifts.* And so again, chap. xiv. 1, Ζηλοῦτε τὰ πνευματικά, "Desire spirituals,"—that is, *gifts;* for so it is explained, chap. xii. 31, Ζηλοῦτε τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ κρείττονα, "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Whenever, therefore, they are called πνευματικά, there χαρίσματα, denoting their *general nature,* is

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to be supplied; and where they are called *χαρίσματα* only, *πνευματικά* is to be understood, as expressing their *especial difference* from all others. They are neither *natural* nor *moral*, but *spiritual* endowments; for both their *author*, *nature*, and *object*, are respected herein. Their *author* is the Holy Spirit; their *nature* is spiritual; and the *objects* about which they are exercised are *spiritual things*.

Again; with respect unto the *manner* of their communication, they are called *μερισμοὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἁγίου*, Heb. ii. 4, "distributions," or partitions "of the Holy Ghost;" not whereof the Holy Ghost is the *subject*, as though he were parted or divided, as the *Socinians* dream on this place, but whereof he is the *author*, the distributions which he makes. And they are thus called divisions, partitions, or distributions, because they are of divers sorts and kinds, according as the edification of the church did require; and they were not at any time all of them given out unto any one person, at least so as that others should not be made partakers of the same sort. From the same inexhaustible treasure of bounty, grace, and power, these gifts are variously distributed unto men. And this variety, as the apostle proves, gives both ornament and advantage to the church: "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?" etc., 1 Cor. xii. 14–25. It is this *μερισμός*, this *various distribution* of gifts, that makes the church an *organical* body; and in this composure, with the peculiar uses of the members of the body, consist the harmony, beauty, and safety of the whole. Were there no more but *one gift*, or gifts *of one sort*, the whole body would be but one member; as where there is none, there is no animated body, but a dead carcass.

And this various distribution, as it is an act of the Holy Spirit, produceth *διαίρεσιν· Διαιρέσεις χαρισμάτων εἰσί*,—"There are diversities of gifts," 1 Cor. xii. 4. The *gifts* thus distributed in the church are *divers* as to their sorts and kinds, one of one kind, another of another. An account hereof is given by the apostle particularly, verses 8–10, in a distinct enumeration of the sorts or kinds of them. The edification of the church is the general end of them all; but *divers*, *distinct*, *different* gifts are required thereunto.

These gifts being bestowed, they are variously expressed, with regard unto the nature and manner of those operations which we are enabled unto by virtue of them. So are they termed *διακονίας*, "ministrations," 1 Cor. xii. 5,—that is, powers and abilities whereby some are enabled to *administer* spiritual things unto the benefit, advantage, and edification of others; and *ἐνεργήματα*, verse 6, "effectual workings" or operations, efficaciously producing the effects which they are applied unto; and lastly, they are comprised by the apostle in that expression, *Φανέρωσις τοῦ Πνεύματος*,—"The manifestation of the Spirit," verse 7. In and by them doth the Holy Spirit evidence

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and manifest his power; for the effects produced by them, and themselves in their own nature, especially some of them, do evince that the Holy Spirit is in them, that they are given and wrought by him, and are the ways whereby he acts his own power and grace.

These things are spoken in the Scripture as to the *name* of these spiritual gifts. And it is evident that if we part with our interest and concern in them, we must part with no small portion of the New Testament; for the mention of them, directions about them, their use and abuse, do so frequently occur, that if we are not concerned in them we are not so in the gospel.

CHAPTER II.

Differences between spiritual gifts and saving grace.

THEIR *nature in general*, which in the next place we inquire into, will be much discovered in the consideration of those things wherein these *gifts* do agree with *saving graces*, and wherein they differ from them.

First, There are four things wherein *spiritual gifts* and *saving graces* do agree:—

1. They are, both sorts of them, the *purchase of Christ* for his church, the especial fruit of his mediation. We speak not of such gifts or endowments of men's minds as consist merely in the improvement of their natural faculties: such are *wisdom, learning, skill in arts and sciences;* which those may abound and excel in who are utter strangers to the church of Christ, and frequently they do so, to their own exaltation and contempt of others. Nor do I intend abilities for actions, moral, civil, or political; as *fortitude, skill in government* or rule, and the like. For although these are gifts of the power of the Spirit of God, yet they do belong unto those operations which he exerciseth in upholding or ruling of the world, or the old creation as such, whereof I have treated before. But I intend those alone which are conversant about the gospel, the things and duties of it, the *administration* of its ordinances, the propagation of its doctrine, and profession of its ways. And herein also I put a difference between them and all those gifts of the Spirit about sacred things which any of the people of God enjoyed under the old testament; for we speak only of those which are "powers of the world to come." Those others were suited to the economy of the old covenant, and confined with the light which God was pleased then to communicate unto his church. Unto the *gospel state* they were not suited, nor would be useful in it. Hence the prophets, who had the most emi-

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nent gifts, did yet all of them come short of John the Baptist, because they had not, by virtue of their gifts, that acquaintance with the person of Christ and insight into his work of mediation that he had; and yet also he came short of him that is "least in the kingdom of heaven," because his gifts were not purely *evangelical*. Wherefore, those gifts whereof we treat are such as belong unto the kingdom of God erected in an especial manner by Jesus Christ after his ascension into heaven; for he was exalted that he might *fill all things*, τὰ πάντα, that is, the whole church, with these effects of his power and grace. The power, therefore, of communicating these gifts was granted unto the Lord Christ as mediator, by the Father, for the foundation and edification of his church, as it is expressed, Acts ii. 33; and by them was his kingdom both set up and propagated, and is preserved in the world. These were the weapons of warfare which he furnished his disciples withal when he gave them commission to go forth and *subdue the world* unto the obedience of the gospel, Acts i. 4, 8; and *mighty* were they through God unto that purpose, 2 Cor. x. 3–6. In the use and exercise of them did the gospel "run, and was glorified," to the ruin of the kingdom of Satan and darkness in the world. And that he was ever able to erect it again, under another form than that of *Gentilism*, as he hath done in the *antichristian* apostasy of the church visible, it was from a neglect and contempt of these gifts, with their due use and improvement. When men began to neglect the attaining of these spiritual gifts, and the exercise of them, in praying, in preaching, in interpretation of the Scripture, in all the administrations and whole worship of the church, betaking themselves wholly to their own abilities and inventions, accommodated unto their ease and secular interest, it was an easy thing for Satan to erect again his kingdom, though not in the old manner, because of the light of the Scripture, which had made an impression on the minds of men which he could not obliterate. Wherefore he never attempted openly any more to set up *Heathenism* or *Paganism*, with the gods of the old world and their worship; but he insensibly raised another kingdom, which pretended some likeness unto and compliance with the *letter of the word*, though it came at last to be in all things expressly contrary thereunto. This was his kingdom of *apostasy and darkness*, under the *papal antichristianism* and woful degeneracy of other Christians in the world; for when men who pretend themselves intrusted with the *preservation of the kingdom of Christ* did wilfully cast away those weapons of their warfare whereby the world was subdued unto him, and ought to have been kept in subjection by them, what else could ensue?

By these gifts, I say, doth the Lord Christ demonstrate his power and exercise his rule. External force and carnal weapons were far

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from his thoughts, as unbecoming his absolute sovereignty over the souls of men, his infinite power and holiness. Neither did any ever betake themselves unto them in the affairs of Christ's kingdom, but either when they had utterly lost and abandoned these spiritual weapons, or did not believe that they are sufficient to maintain the interest of the gospel, though originally they were so to introduce and fix it in the world,—that is, that although the *gifts of the Holy Ghost* were sufficient and effectual to *bring in* the truth and doctrine of the gospel against all opposition, yet are they not so to *maintain* it; which they may do well once more to consider. Herein, therefore, they agree with *saving graces;* for that they are peculiarly from Jesus Christ the mediator is confessed by all, unless it be by such as by whom all real internal grace is denied. But the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, with their respect unto the Lord Christ as mediator, have been sufficiently before confirmed.

2. There is an agreement between *saving graces* and *spiritual gifts* with respect unto their *immediate efficient cause.* They are, both sorts of them, wrought by the *power of the Holy Ghost.* As to what concerneth the former, or saving grace, I have already treated of that argument at large; nor will any deny that the Holy Ghost is the author of these *graces* but those that deny that there are any such. That these *gifts* are so wrought by him is expressly declared wherever there is mention of them, in general or particular. Wherefore, when they acknowledge that there were such gifts, all confess him to be their author. By whom he is denied so to be, it is only because they deny the *continuance of any such gifts* in the church of God. But this is that which we shall disprove.

3. Herein also they agree, that both sorts of them are designed unto the *good, benefit, ornament,* and *glory* of the church. The church is the proper seat and subject of them, to it are they granted, and in it do they reside; for Christ is given to be the "head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all," Eph. i. 22, 23. But this "church" falls under a double consideration:—first, as it is *believing;* secondly, as it is *professing.* In the first respect absolutely it is *invisible,* and as such is the peculiar subject of saving grace. This is that church which "Christ loved and gave himself for, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish," Eph. v. 26, 27. This is the work of saving grace, and by a participation thereof do men become *members of this church,* and not otherwise. And hereby is the *professing* church quickened and enabled unto profession in an acceptable manner; for the *elect* receive grace unto this end in this world, that they may

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glorify Christ and the gospel in the exercise of it, Col. i. 6; John xv. 8. But gifts are bestowed on the professing church to render it *visible* in such a way as whereby God is glorified. Grace gives an *invisible life* to the church, gifts give it a *visible profession;* for hence doth the church become *organical*, and disposed into that order which is beautiful and comely. Where any church is *organized* merely by *outward rules*, perhaps of their own devising, and makes profession only in an attendance unto outward order, not following the leading of the Spirit in the communication of his gifts, both as to order and discharge of the duties of profession, it is but the *image* of a church, wanting an animating principle and form. That profession which renders a church *visible* according to the mind of Christ, is the *orderly exercise of the spiritual gifts* bestowed on it, in a conversation evidencing the *invisible principle* of saving grace. Now, these gifts are conferred on the church in order unto "the edification of itself in love," Eph. iv. 16, as also for the propagation of its profession in the world, as shall be declared afterward. Wherefore, both of these sorts have in general the *same end*, or are given by Christ unto the same purpose,—namely, the *good and benefit* of the church, as they are respectively suited to promote them.

4. It may also be added, that they agree herein, that they have both the same respect unto the *bounty of Christ*. Hence every *grace* is a *gift*, that which is given and freely bestowed on them that have it, Matt. xiii. 11; Phil. i. 29. And although, on the other side, every *gift* be not a *grace*, yet, proceeding from gracious favour and bounty, they are so called, Rom. xii. 6; Eph. iv. 7. How, in their due exercise, they are mutually helpful and assistant unto each other, shall be declared afterward.

Secondly, We may consider wherein the difference lies or doth consist which is between these *spiritual gifts* and *sanctifying graces:* and this may be seen in sundry instances; as,—

1. Saving graces are καρπός, the "fruit" or fruits "of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22; Eph. v. 9; Phil. i. 11. Now, *fruits* proceed from an *abiding root* and stock, of whose nature they do partake. There must be a "good tree" to bring forth "good fruit," Matt. xii. 33. No external watering or applications unto the earth will cause it to bring forth useful fruits, unless there are roots from which they spring and are educed. The Holy Spirit is as the root unto these fruits; the root which bears them, and which they do not bear, as Rom. xi. 18. Therefore, in order of nature, is he given unto men before the production of any of these fruits. Thereby are they ingrafted into the olive, are made such branches in Christ, the true vine, as derive vital juice, nourishment, and fructifying virtue from him, even by the Spirit. So is he "a well of water springing up into everlast-

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ing life," John iv. 14. He is a spring in believers; and all saving graces are but waters arising from that living, overflowing spring. From him, as a *root* or spring, as an eternal virtue, power, or principle, do all these *fruits* come. To this end doth he dwell in them and abide with them, according to the promise of our Lord Jesus Christ, John xiv. 17; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. iii. 16; whereby the Lord Christ effecteth his purpose in "ordaining his disciples to bring forth fruit" that should "remain," John xv. 16. In the place of his holy residence, he worketh these effects freely, according to his own will. And there is nothing that hath the true nature of *saving grace* but what is so a *fruit of the Spirit.* We have not first these *graces,* and then by virtue of them receive the *Spirit,* (for whence should we have them of ourselves?) but the *Spirit* bestowed on us worketh them in us, and gives them a *spiritual, divine nature,* in conformity unto his own.

With *gifts,* singly considered, it is otherwise. They are indeed *works* and *effects,* but not properly *fruits* of the Spirit, nor are anywhere so called. They are *effects* of his operation *upon* men, not *fruits* of his working *in* them; and, therefore, many receive these gifts who never receive the Spirit as to the principal end for which he is promised. They receive him not to sanctify and make them *temples* unto God; though *metonymically,* with respect unto his outward effects, they may be said to be made partakers of him. This renders them of a *different nature* and kind from saving graces; for whereas there is an agreement and coincidence between them in the respects before mentioned, and whereas the seat and subject of them,—that is, of gifts absolutely, and principally of graces also,—is the *mind,* the difference of their nature proceeds from the different manner of their communication from the Holy Spirit.

2. *Saving grace* proceeds from, or is the effect and fruit of, *electing love.* This I have proved before, in our inquiry into the nature of holiness. See it directly asserted, Eph. i. 3, 4; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Acts ii. 47, xiii. 48. Whom God graciously chooseth and designeth unto eternal life, them he prepares for it by the communication of the means which are necessary unto that end, Rom. viii. 28–30. Hereof sanctification, or the communication of saving grace, is comprehensive; for we are "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit," 2 Thess. ii. 13, for this is that whereby we are "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. The end of God in election is the *sonship and salvation* of the elect, "to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. i. 5, 6; and this cannot be unless his *image* be renewed in them in holiness or saving graces. These, therefore, he works in them, in pursuit of his eternal purpose therein. But *gifts,* on the other hand, which are no more

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but so, and where they are solitary or alone, are only the effects of a temporary election. Thus God *chooseth* some men unto some *office* in the church, or unto some *work* in the world. As this includeth a preferring them before or above others, or the using them when others are not used, we call it *election;* and in itself it is their fitting for and separation unto their office or work. And this *temporary election* is the cause and rule of the *dispensation* of gifts. So he chose Saul to be king over his people, and gave him thereon "another heart," or gifts fitting him for rule and government. So our Lord Jesus Christ chose and called at the first *twelve* to be his apostles, and gave unto them all alike miraculous gifts. His *temporary choice* of them was the ground of his communication of gifts unto them. By virtue hereof no saving graces were communicated unto them, for one of them never arrived unto a participation of them. "Have not I," saith our Saviour unto them, "chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John vi. 70. He had chosen them unto their office, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts for the discharge thereof; but *one* of them being not "chosen unto salvation before the foundation of the world," being not "ordained unto eternal life," but, on the other side, being the "son of perdition," or one certainly appointed unto destruction, or "before of old ordained unto that condemnation," he continued void of all sanctifying graces, so as, unto any acceptation with God, he was in no better condition than the devil himself, whose work he was to do. Yet was he, by virtue of this choice unto the office of *apostleship* for a season, endowed with the same spiritual gifts that the others were. And this distinction our Saviour himself doth plainly lay down; for whereas he says, John vi. 70, "Have not I chosen you twelve,"—that is, with a *temporary choice* unto office,—chap. xiii. 18, he saith, "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen," so excepting Judas from that number, as is afterward expressly declared: for the *election* which here he intends is that which is accompanied with an infallible ordination unto abiding fruit-bearing, chap. xv. 16, that is, eternal election, wherein Judas had no interest.

And thus it is in general, and in other instances. When God chooseth any one to *eternal life,* he will, in pursuit of that purpose of his, communicate *saving grace* unto him. And although all believers have gifts also sufficient to enable them unto the discharge of their duty in their station or condition in the church, yet they do not depend on the *decree of election.* And where God calleth any, or chooseth any, unto an office, charge, or work in the church, he always furnisheth him with gifts suited unto the end of them. He doth not so, indeed, unto all that will take any office unto themselves; but he doth so unto all whom he calls thereunto. Yea, his call is

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no otherwise known but by the *gifts* which he communicates for the discharge of the work or office whereunto any are called. In common use, I confess, all things run contrary hereunto. Most men greatly insist on the necessity of an *outward call* unto the office of the ministry; and so far, no doubt, they do well, for "God is the God of order," —that is, of his own: but whereas they limit this outward call of theirs unto certain persons, ways, modes, and ceremonies of their own, without which they will not allow that any man is rightly called unto the ministry, they do but contend to oppress the consciences of others by their power and with their inventions. But their most pernicious mistake is yet remaining. So that persons have, or do receive, an *outward call* in their mode and way,—which what it hath of a call in it I know not,—they are not solicitous whether they are called of God or no: for they continually admit them unto their *outward call* on whom God hath bestowed no spiritual gifts to fit them for their office; whence it is as evident as if written with the beams of the sun, that he never called them thereunto. They are as watchful as they are able that God himself shall impose none on them besides their way and order, or their *call;* for let a man be furnished with ministerial gifts never so excellent, yet if he will not come up to their call, they will do what lies in them for ever to shut him out of the ministry. But they will impose upon God without his *call* every day; for if they *ordain* any one in their way unto an office, though he have no more of spiritual gifts than Balaam's ass, yet (if you will believe them) Christ must accept of him for a minister of his, whether he will or no. But let men dispose of things as they please, and as it seemeth good unto them, Christ hath no other order in this matter, but "As every one hath received the gift, so let them minister, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God," 1 Pet. iv. 10, Rom. xii. 6–8. It is true that no man ought to take upon him the *office* of the ministry but he that is, and until he be, solemnly *called* and set apart thereunto by the church; but it is no less true that no church hath either *rule* or *right* so to call or set apart any one to the ministry whom Christ hath not previously called by the communication of spiritual gifts necessary to the discharge of his office. And these things must be largely insisted on afterward.

3. *Saving grace* is an effect of the *covenant*, and bestowed in the accomplishment and by virtue of the promises thereof. This hath been declared elsewhere at large, where we treated of regeneration and sanctification. All that are taken into this covenant are sanctified and made holy. There is no grace designed unto any in the *eternal purpose of God*, none purchased or procured by the *mediation of Christ*, but it is *comprised* in and *exhibited* by the promises of the covenant. Wherefore, they only who are taken into that

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covenant are made partakers of saving grace, and they are all so. Things are not absolutely so with respect unto spiritual gifts, although they also in some sense belong unto the covenant: for the promises of the covenant are of two sorts,—(1.) Such as belong unto the *internal* form and essence of it; (2.) Such as belong unto its *outward administration*,—that is, the ways and means whereby its internal grace is made effectual. *Saving grace* proceedeth from the former, *gifts* relate unto the latter; for all the promises of the *plentiful effusion of the Spirit* under the new testament, which are frequently applied unto him as he works and effects evangelical gifts, extraordinary and ordinary, in men, do belong unto the new covenant,—not as unto its internal essence and form, but as unto its outward administration. And if you overthrow this distinction, that the covenant is considered either with respect unto its internal grace or its external administration, every thing in religion will be cast into confusion. Take away *internal grace*, as some do, and the whole is rendered a mere outside appearance; take away the *outward administration*, and all spiritual gifts and order thereon depending must cease. But as it is possible that some may belong unto the covenant with respect unto *internal grace* who are no way taken into the external administration of it, as elect infants who die before they are baptized; so it is frequent that some may belong to the covenant with respect to its *outward administration*, by virtue of spiritual gifts, who are not made partakers of its inward effectual grace.

4. Saving grace hath an immediate respect unto the *priestly office of Jesus Christ*, with the discharge thereof in his oblation and intercession. There is, I acknowledge, no gracious communication unto men that respects any one office of Christ exclusively unto the others: for his whole mediation hath an influence into all that we receive from God in a way of favour or grace; and it is his person, as vested with all his offices, that is the immediate fountain of all grace unto us: but yet something may, yea, sundry things do, peculiarly respect some one of his offices, and are the immediate effects of the virtue and efficacy thereof. So is our *reconciliation* and peace with God the peculiar effect of his *oblation*, which as a priest he offered unto God. And so in like manner is our *sanctification* also, wherein we are washed and cleansed from our sins in his blood, Eph. v. 25, 26; Tit. ii. 14. And although grace be wrought in us by the administration of the *kingly* power of Christ, yet it is in the pursuit of what he hath done for us as a *priest*, and for the making of it effectual unto us; for by his *kingly* power he makes effectual the fruits of his oblation and intercession. But gifts proceed solely from the *regal office* and power of Christ. They have a remote respect

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unto and foundation in the death of Christ, in that they are all given and distributed unto and for the good of that church which he purchased with his own blood; but immediately they are effects only of his *kingly* power. Hence authority to give and dispose them is commonly placed as a consequent of his exaltation at the right hand of God, or with respect thereunto, Matt. xxviii. 18; Acts ii. 33. This the apostle declares at large, Eph. iv. 7, 8, 11, 12. Christ being exalted at the right hand of God, all power in heaven and earth being given unto him, and he being given to be head over all things unto the church, and having for that end received the promise of the Spirit from the Father, he gives out these gifts as it seemeth good unto him. And the continuation of their communication is not the least evidence of the continuance of the exercise of his kingdom; for besides the faithful testimony of the word to that purpose, there is a threefold evidence thereof, giving us experience of it:—(1.) His communication of saving grace in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of the elect; for these things he worketh immediately by his kingly power. And whilst there are any in the world savingly called and sanctified, he leaves not himself without witness as to his kingly power over all flesh, whereon he "gives eternal life unto as many as the Father hath given him," John xvii. 2. But this evidence is wholly invisible unto the world, neither is it capable of receiving it when tendered, because it cannot receive the Spirit, nor seeth him, nor knoweth him, John xiv. 17; nor are the things thereof exposed to the judgment of sense or reason, 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10. (2.) Another evidence hereof is given in the *judgments* that he executes in the world, and the outward protection which he affords unto his church. On both these there are evident impressions of the continued actual exercise of his divine power and authority; for in the judgments that he executes on persons and nations that either reject the gospel or persecute it, especially in some signal and uncontrollable instance, as also in the guidance, deliverance, and protection of his church, he manifests that though he was dead, yet he is alive, and hath the keys of hell and of death. But yet because he is, on the one hand, pleased to exercise great patience towards many of his open, stubborn adversaries, yea, the greatest of them, suffering them to walk and prosper in their own ways; and, [on the other], to leave his church unto various trials and distresses, his power is much hid from the world at present in these dispensations. (3.) The third evidence of the continuance of the administration of his mediatory kingdom consists in his *dispensation of these spiritual gifts*, which are properly the *powers of the new world;* for such is the nature of them and their use, such the sovereignty that appears in their distribution, such their distinction and

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difference from all natural endowments, that even the world cannot but take notice of them, though it violently hate and persecute them, and the church is abundantly satisfied with the sense of the power of Christ in them. Moreover, the principal end of these gifts is to enable the officers of the church unto the due administration of all the laws and ordinances of Christ unto its edification. But all these laws and ordinances, these offices and officers, he gives unto the church as the Lord over his own house, as the sole sovereign law-giver and ruler thereof.

5. They differ as unto the *event* even in this world they may come unto, and ofttimes actually do so accordingly; for all *gifts*, the best of them, and that in the highest degree wherein they may be attained in this life, may be utterly lost or taken away. The *law* of their communication is, that he who improveth not that *talent* or measure of them which he hath received, it shall be taken from him; for whereas they are given for no other end but to *trade withal*, according to the several capacities and opportunities that men have in the church, or their families, or their own private exercise, if that be utterly neglected, to what end should they be left unto rust and uselessness in the minds of any? Accordingly we find it to come to pass. Some neglect them, some reject them, and from both sorts they are judicially taken away. Such we have amongst us. Some there are who had received considerable spiritual abilities for evangelical administrations, but after a while they have fallen into an outward state of things wherein, as they suppose, they shall have no *advantage* by them, yea, that their exercise would turn to their *disadvantage*, and thereon do wholly neglect them. By this means they have insensibly decayed, until they become as devoid of spiritual abilities as if they never had experience of any assistance in that kind. They can no more either pray, or speak, or evidence the power of the Spirit of God in any thing unto the edification of the church. "Their arm is dried up, and their right eye is utterly darkened," Zech. xi. 17. And this sometimes they come to be sensible of, yea, ashamed of, and yet cannot retrieve themselves. But, for the most part, they fall into such a state as wherein the profession and use of them become, as they suppose, inconsistent with their present interest; and so they openly renounce all concernment in them. Neither, for the most part, do they stay here, but after they have rejected them in themselves, and espoused *lazy*, *profitable*, outward helps in their room, they *blaspheme* the Author of them in others, and declare them all to be delusions, fancies, and imaginations; and if any one hath the confidence to own the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the discharge of the duties of the gospel unto the edification of the church, he becomes unto them a scorn and reproach. These are branches cut off

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from the Vine, whom men gather [for the fire], or those whose miserable condition is described by the apostle, Heb. vi. 4–6. But one way or other these gifts may be utterly lost or taken away from them who have once received them, and that whether they be *ordinary* or *extraordinary*. There is no kind of them, no degree of them, that can give us any security that they shall be always continued with us, or at all beyond our diligent attendance unto their use and exercise. With *saving grace* it is not so. It is, indeed, subject unto various decays in us, and its thriving or flourishing in our souls depends upon and answers unto our diligent endeavour in the use of all means of holiness ordinarily, 2 Pet. i. 5–10; for besides that no man can have the least evidence of any thing of this grace in him if he be totally negligent in its exercise and improvement, so no man ought to expect that it will thrive or abound in him unless he constantly and diligently attend unto it, and give up himself in all things to its conduct;—but yet, as to the continuance of it in the souls of the elect, as to the life and being of its principle, and its principal effect in habitual conformity unto God and his will, it is secured in the covenant of grace.

6. On whomsoever *saving grace* is bestowed, it is so firstly and principally for *himself* and his own good. It is a fruit of the especial love and kindness of God unto his own soul, Jer. xxxi. 3. This both the nature and all the ends of it do declare; for it is given unto us to renew the *image of God in us*, to make us like unto him, to restore our nature, enable us unto obedience, and to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. But yet we must take heed that we think not that grace is bestowed on any *merely for themselves;* for, indeed, it is that wherein God designeth a good unto all: "Vir bonus commune bonum,"—"A good man is a good to all;" Micah v. 7. And, therefore, God in the communication of *saving grace* unto any hath a threefold respect unto others, which it is the duty of them that receive it diligently to consider and attend unto:—(1.) He intends to give an example by it of what is his will, and what he approveth of; and, therefore, he requires of them in whom it is such fruits in holy obedience as may express the example of a holy life in the world, according to the will of God and unto his glory. Hereby doth he further the salvation of the elect, 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2; 1 Cor. vii. 16; convince the unbelieving world at present, 1 Pet. ii. 12, 15, iii. 16; and condemn it hereafter, Heb. xi. 7; and himself is glorified, Matt. v. 16. Let no man, therefore, think that because grace is firstly and principally given him for *himself* and his own spiritual advantage, he must not account for it also with respect unto those other designs of God; yea, he who, in the exercise of what he esteems grace, hath respect only unto himself, gives

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an evidence that he never had any that was genuine and of the right kind. (2.) Fruitfulness unto the benefiting of others is hence also expected. Holy obedience, the effect of saving grace, is frequently expressed in the Scripture by *fruits* and *fruitfulness*. See Col. i. 10. And these fruits, or the things which others are to feed upon and to be sustained by, are to be born by the *plants of the Lord, the trees of righteousness* The fruits of *love, charity, bounty, mercy, wisdom*, are those whereby grace is rendered useful in the world, and is taken notice of as that which is lovely and desirable, Eph. ii. 10. (3.) God requires that by the exercise of *grace* the doctrine of the gospel be adorned and propagated. This doctrine is from God; our profession is our avowing of it so to be. What it is the world knows not, but takes its measure of it from what it observes in them by whom it is professed. And it is the unprofitable, flagitious lives of Christians that have almost thrust the gospel out of the world with contempt. But the care that it be *adorned*, that it be *glorified*, is committed of God unto every one on whom he bestows the least of saving grace; and this is to be done only by the guidance of a holy conversation in conformity thereunto. And many other such blessed ends there are, wherein God hath respect unto the good and advantage of other men in the collation of saving grace upon any. And if gracious persons are not more useful than others in all things that may have a real benefit in them unto mankind, it is their sin and shame. But yet, after all, grace is principally and in the first place given unto men for themselves, their own good and spiritual advantage, out of love to their souls, and in order unto their eternal blessedness; all other effects are but secondary ends of it. But as unto these *spiritual gifts* it is quite otherwise. They are not in the first place bestowed on any for their *own sakes* or their own good, but for the good and benefit of *others*. So the apostle expressly declares, 1 Cor. xii. 7, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." These gifts, whereby the Spirit evidenceth and manifesteth his power, are bestowed on men for this very end, that they may profit and benefit others in their edification; and yet, also, where they are duly improved, they tend much to the spiritual advantage of them on whom they are bestowed, as we shall see afterward. Wherefore, as *grace* is primarily given unto us for ourselves, and secondarily for the good of others; so *gifts* are bestowed in the first place for the edification of others, and secondly for our own spiritual advantage also.

7. The principal difference between them is in their *nature* and kind, discovering itself in the different *subjects, operations*, and *effects;* for those already insisted on are principally from external causes and considerations. And,—(1.) As to the different *subjects* of

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them, *spiritual gifts* are placed and seated in the *mind* or understanding only; whether they are ordinary or extraordinary, they have no other hold or residence in the soul. And they are in the mind as it is *notional* and theoretical, rather than as it is *practical*. They are *intellectual abilities*, and no more. I speak of them which have any residence in us; for some *gifts*, as *miracles* and *tongues*, consisted only in a *transient operation* of an extraordinary power. Of all others, *illumination* is the foundation, and spiritual light their matter. So the apostle declares in his order of expression, Heb. vi. 4. The will, and the affections, and the conscience are unconcerned in them. Wherefore, they *change not the heart* with power, although they may reform the life by the efficacy of light. And although God doth not ordinarily bestow them on flagitious persons, nor continue them with such as after the reception of them become flagitious, yet they may be in those who are unrenewed, and have nothing in them to preserve men absolutely from the worst of sins. But saving grace possesseth the *whole soul;* men are thereby sanctified throughout, in the whole "spirit and soul and body," 1 Thess. v. 23, as hath been at large declared. Not only is the *mind* savingly enlightened, but there is a principle of spiritual life infused into the whole soul, enabling it in all its powers and faculties to act obedientially unto God, whose nature hath been fully explained elsewhere. Hence,—(2.) They differ in their *operations:* for grace changeth and transformeth the whole soul into its own nature, Isa. xi. 6–8; Rom. vi. 17, xii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is a new, a divine nature unto the soul, and is in it a habit disposing, inclining, and enabling of it unto obedience. It acts itself in *faith, love*, and *holiness* in all things. But *gifts* of themselves have not this power nor these operations. They may and do, in those who are possessed of them in and under their exercise, make great impression on their own affections, but they change not the heart, they renew not the mind, they transform not the soul into the image of God. Hence, where *grace* is predominant, every notion of light and truth which is communicated unto the mind is immediately turned into practice, by having the whole soul cast into the mould of it; where only *gifts* bear sway, the use of it in duties unto edification is best, whereunto it is designed. (3.) As to *effects* or consequents, the great difference is that on the part of Christ; Christ doth thereby dwell and reside in our hearts, when concerning many of those who have been made partakers of these other spiritual endowments, he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you," which he will not say of any one whose soul he hath inhabited.

These are some of the principal *agreements and differences* between *saving graces* and *spiritual gifts*, both sorts of them being wrought in

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believers by "that one and the self-same Spirit, which divideth to every one severally as he will." And for a close of this discourse I shall only add, that where these *graces* and *gifts*, in any eminency or good degree, are bestowed on the same persons, they are exceedingly helpful unto each other. A soul sanctified by saving grace is the only proper soil for gifts to flourish in. Grace influenceth gifts unto a due exercise, prevents their abuse, stirs them up unto proper occasions, keeps them from being a matter of pride or contention, and subordinates them in all things unto the glory of God. When the actings of *grace* and *gifts* are inseparable, as when in prayer the Spirit is a Spirit of grace and supplication, the grace and gift of it working together, when utterance in other duties is always accompanied with faith and love, then is God glorified and our own salvation promoted. Then have edifying gifts a beauty and lustre upon them, and generally are most successful, when they are clothed and adorned with humility, meekness, a reverence of God, and compassion for the souls of men; yea, when there is no evidence, no manifestation of their being accompanied with these and the like graces, they are but as a *parable* or wise saying in the mouth of a fool. *Gifts*, on the other side, excite and stir up *grace* unto its proper exercise and operation. How often is faith, love, and delight in God, excited and drawn forth unto especial exercise in believers by the use of their own gifts!

And thus much may suffice as to the nature of these gifts in general; we next consider them under their most general distributions.

CHAPTER III.

Of gifts and offices extraordinary; and first of offices.

THE spiritual gifts whereof we treat respect either *powers* and *duties* in the church, or *duties* only. Gifts that respect *powers* and *duties* are of two sorts, or there have been, or are at any time, two sorts of such *powers* and *duties*, the first whereof was *extraordinary*, the latter *ordinary*, and consequently the gifts subservient unto them must be of two sorts also; which must farther be cleared.

Wherever *power* is given by Christ unto his churches, and *duties* are required in the execution of that *power*, unto the ends of his spiritual kingdom, to be performed by virtue thereof, there is an *office* in the church; for an ecclesiastical office is an especial power given by Christ unto any person or persons for the performance of especial duties belonging unto the edification of the church in an especial manner. And these offices have been of two sorts;—first, *extraordinary;* secondly, *ordinary*. Some seem to deny that there

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was ever any such thing as *extraordinary power* or *extraordinary offices* in the church, for they do provide successors unto all who are pleaded to have been of that kind; and those such as, look how far short they come of them in other things, do exceed them in *power* and *rule*. I shall not contend about words, and shall therefore only inquire what it was that constituted them to be officers of Christ in his church whom thence we call *extraordinary;* and then, if others can duly lay claim unto them, they may be allowed to pass for their successors.

There are four things which constitute an extraordinary officer in the church of God, and consequently are required in and do constitute an extraordinary office:—1. An extraordinary *call* unto an office, such as none other has or can have, by virtue of any law, order, or constitution whatever. 2. An extraordinary *power* communicated unto persons so called, enabling them to act what they are so called unto, wherein the essence of any office doth consist. 3. Extraordinary *gifts* for the exercise and discharge of that power. 4. Extraordinary *employment* as to its extent and measure, requiring extraordinary labour, travail, zeal, and self-denial. All these do and must concur in that office and unto those offices which we call extraordinary.

Thus was it with the apostles, prophets, and evangelists at the first, which were all extraordinary *teaching officers* in the church, and all that ever were so, 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11. Besides these, there were, at the first planting of the church, persons endued with extraordinary gifts, as of miracles, healing, and tongues, which did not of themselves constitute them officers, but do belong to the second head of gifts, which concern duties only. Howbeit these gifts were always most eminently bestowed on them who were called unto the extraordinary offices mentioned: 1 Cor. xiv. 18, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all." They had the same gift some of them, but the apostle had it in a more eminent degree. See Matt. x. 8. And we may treat briefly in our passage of these several sorts of extraordinary officers:—

FIRST, [As] for the *apostles*, they had a double *call*, *mission*, and *commission*, or a twofold apostleship. Their first call was unto a subserviency unto the personal ministry of Jesus Christ; for he was a "minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers," Rom. xv. 8. In the discharge of this his personal ministry, it was necessary that he should have peculiar servants and officers under him, to prepare his way and work, and to attend him therein. So "he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach," Mark iii. 14. This was the substance of their first call and work,—

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namely, to attend the presence of Christ, and to go forth to preach as he gave them order. Hence because he was in his own person, as to his *prophetical* office, the "minister only of the circumcision," being therein, according to all the promises, sent only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," he confined those who were to be thus assistant unto him in that his especial work and ministry, and whilst they were so, unto the same persons and people, expressly prohibiting them to extend their line or measure any farther. "Go not," saith he, "into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," Matt. x. 5. This "rather" was absolutely exclusive of the others during his personal ministry, and afterward included only the pre-eminence of the Israelites, that they were to have the gospel offered unto them in the first place: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you," Acts. xiii. 46.

And this, it may be, occasioned that difference which was afterward among them, whether their ministry extended unto the Gentiles or no; as we may see, Acts x. and xi. But whereas our Saviour, in that commission by virtue whereof they were to act after his resurrection, had extended their office and power expressly to "all nations," Matt. xxviii. 19, or to "every creature in all the world," Mark xvi. 15, a man would wonder whence that uncertainty should arise. I am persuaded that God suffered it so to be that the calling of the Gentiles might be more signalized, or made more eminent thereby; for whereas this was the great "mystery which in other ages was not made known," but "hid in God," namely, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ" (that is, of the promise made unto Abraham) "by the gospel," Eph. iii. 3, 5–11, it being now to be laid open and displayed, he would by their hesitation about it have it searched into, examined, tried, and proved, that the faith of the church might never be shaken about it in after ages. And, in like manner, when God at any time suffereth differences and doubts about the truth or his worship to arise in the church, he doth it for holy ends, although for the present we may not be able to discover them. But this ministry of the apostles, with its powers and duties, this apostleship, which extended only unto the church of the Jews, ceased at the death of Christ, or at the end of his own personal ministry in this world; nor can any, I suppose, pretend unto a succession to them therein. Who or what peculiar instruments he will use and employ for the final recovery of that miserable, lost people, whether he will do it by an ordinary or an extraordinary ministry, by gifts miraculous, or by the naked efficacy of the gospel, is known only in his own holy wisdom and counsel. The conjectures of men about these things

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are vain and fruitless; for although the promises under the Old Testament for the *calling of the Gentiles* were far more clear and numerous than those which remain concerning the *recalling of the Jews*, yet because the manner, way, and all other circumstances, were obscured, the whole is called a *mystery hid in God* from all the former ages of the church. Much more, therefore, may the way and manner of the recalling of the Jews be esteemed a hidden mystery; as indeed it is, notwithstanding the dreams and conjectures of too many.

But these same apostles, the same individual persons, Judas only excepted, had another call, unto that office of apostleship which had respect unto the whole work and interest of Christ in the world. They were now to be made *princes in all lands*, rulers, leaders in spiritual things of all the inhabitants of the earth, Ps. xlv. 16. And to make this call the more conspicuous and evident, as also because it includes in it the institution and nature of the office itself whereunto they were called, our blessed Saviour proceedeth in it by sundry degrees; for,—1. He gave unto them a *promise of power* for their office, or office-power, Matt. xvi. 19. So he promised unto them, in the person of Peter, the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," or a power of spiritual binding and loosing of sinners, of remitting or retaining sin, by the doctrine of the gospel, Matt. xviii. 18; John xx. 23. 2. He actually collated a *right* unto that power upon them, expressed by an outward pledge: John xx. 21–23, "Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." And this communication of the Holy Ghost was such as gave them a peculiar right and title unto their office, but not a right and power unto its exercise. 3. He *sealed*, as it were, *their commission* which they had for the discharge of their office, containing the whole warranty they had to enter upon the world, and subdue it unto the obedience of the gospel: Matt. xxviii. 18–20, "Go teach, baptize, command." But yet, 4. All these things did not absolutely give them a present power for the exercise of that office whereunto they were called, or at least a limitation was put for a season upon it; for under all this provision and furniture, they are commanded to stay at Jerusalem, and not address themselves unto the discharge of their office, until that were fulfilled which gave it its completeness and perfection, Acts i. 4, 8. Wherefore it is said, that *after his ascension into heaven*, he "gave some to be apostles," Eph. iv. 8, 11. He gave not any *completely to be apostles* until then. He had before appointed the *office*, designed the *persons*, given them their *commission*, with the visible *pledge* of the power they should afterward

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receive; but there yet remained the communication of *extraordinary gifts* unto them, to enable them unto the discharge of their office. And this was that which, *after the ascension* of Christ, they received on the day of Pentecost, as it is related, Acts ii. And this was so essentially necessary unto their office that the Lord Christ is said *therein* to give some to be apostles; for without these gifts they were not so, nor could discharge that office unto his honour and glory. And these things all concurred to the constitution of this office, with the call of any persons to the discharge of it. The *office* itself was instituted by Christ, the *designation* and call of the persons unto this office was an immediate act of Christ; so also was their *commission* and power, and the *extraordinary gifts* which he endowed them withal. And whereas the Lord Christ is said to give this *office* and these *officers* after his ascension,—namely, in the communication of the gifts of the Holy Ghost unto those *officers* for the discharge of that *office*,—it is evident that all office-power depends on the communication of gifts, whether extraordinary or ordinary. But where any of these is wanting, there is no apostle, nor any successor of one apostle. Therefore, when Paul was afterward added unto the twelve in the same power and office, he was careful to declare how he received both *call*, *commission*, and power immediately from Jesus Christ: "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead," Gal. i. 1; whereas those who pretend to be their successors, if they will speak the truth, must say that they are what they are neither of Jesus Christ nor God the Father, but of men and by man. However, they neither dare nor will pretend so to be of God and Christ as not to be called by the ministry of man, which evacuates the pretence of succession in this office.

SECONDLY, Furthermore; unto the *office* described there belong the *measure* and extent of its power *objectively*, and the power itself intensively or *subjectively*. For the first, the *object* of apostolical power was twofold:—1. The *world* to be converted; 2. The *churches* gathered of those that were converted, whether Jews or Gentiles.

1. For the first, their commission extended to all the world; and every apostle had right, power, and authority to "preach the gospel to every creature under heaven," as he had opportunity so to do, Matt. xxviii. 18–20; Mark xvi. 15; Rom. x. 14–18. Now, whereas it was impossible that any one person should pass through the whole world in the pursuit of this right and power; and whereas, for that cause, our Lord had ordained twelve to that purpose, that the work might the more effectually be carried on by their endeavours, it is highly probable that they did by agreement distribute the nations into certain lots and portions, which they singly took upon them to in-

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struct. So there was an agreement between Paul on the one hand with Barnabas, and Peter, James, and John, on the other, that they should go to the Gentiles, and the other take more especial care of the Jews, Gal. ii. 7–9. And the same apostle afterward designed, to avoid the *line or allotment* of others, to preach the gospel where the people were not allotted unto the especial charge of any other, 2 Cor. x. 16. But yet this was not so appointed as if their power was limited thereby, or that any of them came short in his *apostolical* power in any other place in the world, as well as that wherein for conveniency he particularly exercised his ministry; for the power of every one still equally extended unto all nations, although they could not always exercise it in all places alike. Nor did that express agreement that was between Peter and Paul, about the Gentiles and the Circumcision, discharge them of their duty, that the one should have more regard unto the Circumcision or the other unto the Gentiles, nor did it limit their power or bound their apostolical authority, but only directed the exercise of it as unto the principal intention and design. Wherefore, as to the *right* and authority of preaching the gospel and converting persons unto the faith, the *whole world* fell equally under the care, and was in the commission of every apostle, although they applied themselves unto the discharge of this work in particular according to their own wisdom and choice, under the guidance and disposal of the providence of God. And, as I will not deny but that it is the duty of every Christian, and much more of every minister of the gospel, to promote the knowledge of Christ unto all mankind, as they have opportunities and advantages so to do; yet I must say, if there be any who pretend to be successors of the apostles as to the extent of their office-power unto all nations, notwithstanding whatever they may pretend of such an agreement to take up with a portion accommodated unto their ease and interest, whilst so many nations of the earth lie unattempted as to the preaching of the gospel, they will one day be found transgressors of their own profession, and will be dealt withal accordingly.

2. Out of the world, by the preaching of the gospel, persons were called, converted, and thereon gathered into holy societies or *churches*, for the celebration of gospel-worship and their own mutual edification. All these churches, wherever they were called and planted in the whole world, were equally under the authority of every apostle. Where any church was called and planted by any particular apostle, there was a peculiar relation between him and them, and so a peculiar mutual care and love; nor could it otherwise be. So the apostle Paul pleads an especial interest in the Corinthians and others, unto whom he had been a *spiritual father* in their conversion, and the instrument of forming Christ in them. Such churches, therefore, as

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were of their own peculiar calling and planting, it is probable they did every one take care of in a peculiar manner. But yet no limitation of the apostolical power ensued hereon. Every apostle had still the care of all the churches on him, and apostolical authority in every church in the world equally, which he might exercise as occasion did require. Thus Paul affirmeth that the "care of all the churches came upon him daily," 2 Cor. xi. 28; and it was the crime of Diotrephes, for which he is branded, that he opposed the apostolical power of John in that church where probably he was the teacher, 3 John 9, 10. But what power, now, over all churches, or authority in all churches, some may fancy or claim to themselves, I know not; but it were to be wished that men would reckon that care and labour are as extensive in this case as power and authority.

Secondly, Again, the power of this extraordinary office may be considered intensively or formally what it was; and this, in one word, was *all the power that the Lord Christ hath given or thought meet to make use of for the edification of the church.* I shall give a brief description of it in some few general instances:—1. It was a power of administering all the ordinances of Christ in the way and manner of his appointment. Every apostle in all places had power to preach the word, to administer the sacraments, to ordain elders, and to do whatever else belonged unto the worship of the gospel. But yet they had not power to do any of these things any otherwise but as the Lord Christ had appointed them to be done. They could not *baptize* any but believers and their seed, Acts viii. 36–38, xvi. 15. They could not administer the Lord's supper to any but the church and in the church, 1 Cor. x. 16, 17, xi. 17–34. They could not *ordain elders* but by the suffrage and election of the people, Acts xiv. 23. Those, indeed, who pretend to be their successors plead for such a right in themselves unto some, if not all, gospel administrations, as that they may take liberty to dispose of them at their pleasure, by their sole authority, without any regard unto the rule of all holy duties in particular. 2. It was a power of executing all the laws of Christ, with the penalties annexed unto their disobedience. "We have," saith the apostle, "in a readiness wherewith to revenge all disobedience," 2 Cor. x. 6. And this principally consisted in the power of *excommunication*, or the judiciary excision of any person or persons from the society of the faithful and visible body of Christ in the world. Now, although this power were absolutely in each apostle towards all offenders in every church,—whence Paul affirms that he had himself "delivered Hymeneus and Alexander unto Satan," 1 Tim. i. 20,—yet did they not exercise this power without the concurrence and consent of the church from whence an offender was to be cut off: because that was the mind of Christ, and

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that which the nature of the ordinance did require, 1 Cor. v. 3–5. 3. Their whole power was *spiritual*, and not *carnal*. It respected the souls, minds, and consciences of men alone as its object, and not their bodies, or goods, or liberties in this world. Those extraordinary instances of Ananias and Sapphira in their sudden death, of Elymas in his blindness, were only miraculous operations of God in testifying against their sin, and proceeded not from any *apostolical power* in the discharge of their office. But as unto that kind of power which now hath devoured all other appearances of church authority, and in the sense of the most is only significant,—namely, to *fine, punish, imprison, banish, kill* and *destroy* men and women, Christians, believers, persons of an unblamable, useful conversation, with the worst of carnal weapons and savage cruelty of mind,—as they were never intrusted with it nor any thing of the like kind, so they have sufficiently manifested how their holy souls did abhor the thoughts of such antichristian power and practices, though in others the mystery of iniquity began to work in their days.

The ministry of the *seventy*, also, which the Lord Christ sent forth afterward, to "go two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come," Luke x. 1–3, was in like manner *temporary;* that is, it was subservient and commensurate unto his own *personal ministry* in the flesh. These are commonly called *evangelists* from the general nature of their work, but were not those extraordinary officers which were afterward in the Christian church under that title and appellation. But there was some analogy and proportion between the one and the other; for as these first *seventy* seem to have had an inferior work, and subordinate unto that of the *twelve* in their ministry unto the church of the Jews, during the time of the Lord Christ's converse among them, so those *evangelists* that afterward were appointed were subordinate unto them in their *evangelical apostleship*. And these also, as they were immediately called unto their employment by the Lord Jesus, so their *work* being *extraordinary*, they were endued with *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost, as verses 9, 17, 19.

In the gospel church-state there were *evangelists* also, as they are mentioned, Eph. iv. 11; Acts xxi. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 5;—gospellers, preachers of the gospel, distinct from the ordinary teachers of the churches. Things, I confess, are but obscurely delivered concerning this sort of men in Scripture, their office being not designed unto a continuance. Probably the institution of it was traduced from the temporary ministry of the *seventy* before mentioned. That they were the same persons continued in their first office, as the apostles were, is uncertain and improbable, (though it be not [improbable] that some of them might be called thereunto); as Philip, and Timothy,

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and Titus, were evangelists that were not of that first number. Their especial *call* is not mentioned, nor their *number* anywhere intimated. That their *call* was *extraordinary* is hence apparent, in that no rules are anywhere given or prescribed about their choice or ordination, no qualification of their persons expressed, nor any direction given the church as to its future proceeding about them, no more than about new or other apostles. They seem to have been *called by the apostles*, by the direction of a spirit of prophecy or immediate revelation from Christ. So it is said of Timothy, who is expressly called an evangelist, 2 Tim. iv. 5, that he received that gift "by prophecy," 1 Tim. iv. 14, that is, the gift of the office,—as when Christ ascended, he "gave gifts unto men, some to be evangelists," Eph. iv. 8, 11,—for this way did the Holy Ghost design men unto extraordinary offices and employments, Acts. xiii. 1–3. And when they were so designed by prophecy, or immediate revelation from Christ by the Holy Ghost, then the church in compliance therewith, both "prayed for them" and "laid their hands on them." So when the Holy Ghost had revealed his choosing of Paul and Barnabas unto an especial work, the prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch, where they then were, "fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them," so sending them away, Acts xiii. 3. And when Timothy was called to be an *evangelist* by especial revelation or *prophecy*, the apostle *laid his hands* on him, whereby he received the Holy Ghost in his extraordinary gifts: "The gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands," 2 Tim. i. 6. And as it was usual with him to join others with himself in those epistles which he wrote by immediate divine inspiration, so in this act of *laying his hands* on an *evangelist*, as a sign of the communication of extraordinary gifts, he joined the ordinary presbytery of the church with him that were present in the place where he was so called. It is evident, therefore, that both their *call* and their *gifts* were extraordinary, and therefore so also was their *office:* for although men who have only an *ordinary call* to office may have *extraordinary gifts*, and many had so in primitive times; and although some might have *extraordinary gifts* who were never called unto office at all, as some of those who spake with *tongues* and wrought *miracles*,—yet where there is a concurrence of an *extraordinary call* and *extraordinary gifts*, there the *office* is extraordinary.

The *power* that these officers in the church were intrusted with was *extraordinary;* for this is a certain consequent of an extraordinary call and extraordinary gifts. And this power respected *all churches* in the world equally, yea, and all persons, as the apostles' also did. But whereas their ministry was *subordinate* unto that of the apostles, they were by them guided as to the particular places

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wherein they were to exercise their power and discharge their office for a season. This is evident from Paul's disposal of Titus as to his work and time, Tit. i. 5, iii. 12. But yet their power did at no time depend on their relation unto any particular place or church, nor were they ever ordained to any one place or *see* more than another, but the extent of their employment was every way as large as that of the apostles, both as to the world and as to the churches; only in their present particular disposal of themselves, they were, as it is probable, for the most part under the guidance of the apostles, although sometimes they had particular revelations and directions from the Holy Ghost, or by the ministry of angels, for their especial employment, as Philip had, Acts viii. 26.

And as for their work, it may be reduced unto three heads:—1. To *preach the gospel* in all places and unto all persons, as they had occasion. So Philip went down to Samaria and "preached Christ," Acts viii. 5. And when the apostle Paul chargeth Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist," 2 Tim. iv. 5, he prescribes unto him "preaching the word in season and out of season," verse 2. And whereas this was incumbent in like manner on the *ordinary teachers* of every church, the teaching of these *evangelists* differed from theirs in two things:—(1.) In the *extent* of their work, which, as we showed before, was equal unto that of the apostles; whereas *ordinary bishops*, pastors, or teachers, were to feed, teach, and take care of the especial flocks only which they were set over, Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Pet. v. 2. (2.) They were obliged to *labour in their work* in a more than ordinary manner, as it should seem from 2 Tim. iv. 2, 5. 2. The second part of their work was to confirm the doctrine of the gospel by *miraculous operations*, as occasion did require. So Philip the evangelist wrought many miracles of sundry sorts at Samaria, in the confirmation of the doctrine which he taught, Acts viii. 6, 7, 13. And, in like manner, there is no question but that the rest of the evangelists had the power or gift of miraculous operations, to be exercised as occasion did require, and as they were guided by the Holy Ghost. 3. They were employed in the settling and completing of those churches whose foundations were laid by the apostles; for whereas they had the great work upon them of "preaching the gospel unto all nations," they could not continue long or reside in any one place or church. And yet when persons were newly converted to the faith, and disposed only into an imperfect order, without any especial peculiar officers, guides, or rulers of their own, it was not safe leaving them unto themselves, lest they should be too much at a loss as to gospel order and worship. Wherefore, in such places where any churches were planted but not completed, nor would the design of the apostles suffer them to continue any longer there, they left these

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evangelists among them for a season, who had power, by virtue of their office, to dispose of things in the churches until they came unto completeness and perfection. When this end was attained, and the churches were settled under ordinary elders of their own, the evangelists removed unto other places, according as they were directed or disposed. These things are evident from the instructions given by Paul unto Timothy and Titus, which have all of them respect unto this order.

Some there are who plead for the *continuance of this office*,—some in express terms and under the same name; others for *successors* unto them at least in that part of their work which consisteth in power over many churches. Some say that *bishops* succeed to the apostles, and *presbyters* unto those evangelists; but this is scarce defensible in any tolerable manner by them whose interest it is to defend it, for Timothy, whom they would have to be a bishop, is expressly called an evangelist. That which is pleaded with most probability for their continuance is the *necessity of the work* wherein they were employed, in the rule and settlement of the churches. But the truth is, if their whole work as before described be consulted, as none can perform some parts of it, so it may be very few would overearnestly press after a participation of their office; for to preach the word continually, and that with a peculiar labour and travail, and to move up and down according as the necessity of the edification of the churches doth require, doing nothing in them but according to the rule and appointment of Christ, are things that not many will earnestly covet to be engaged in. But there is an apprehension that there was something more than ordinary power belonging unto this office,—that those who enjoyed it were not obliged always to labour in any particular church, but had the rule of many churches committed unto them. Now, whereas this power is apt to draw other desirable things unto it, or carry them along with it, this is that which some pretend a succession unto. Though they are neither *called* like them, nor *gifted* like them, nor *labour* like them, nor have the same *object* of their employment, much less the same *power of extraordinary operations* with them, yet as to the rule over sundry churches they must needs be their successors! I shall, therefore, briefly do these two things:—1. Show that there are *no such officers as these evangelists* continued by the will of Christ in the ordinary state and course of the church; 2. That there is no need of their continuance from any work applied unto them.

1. And, (1.) The things that are *essential* unto the office of an *evangelist* are unattainable at present unto the church; for where no command, no rule, no authority, no directions, are given for the calling of any officer, there that office must cease, as doth that of the

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apostles, who could not be called but by Jesus Christ. What is required unto the *call* of an *evangelist* was before declared; and unless it can be manifested, either by institution or example, how any one may be *otherwise called* unto that office, no such office can be continued, for a *call* by prophecy or immediate revelation none now will pretend unto, and other call the *evangelists* of old had none.

Nor is there in the Scripture the least mention of the call or appointment of any one to be an *ecclesiastical officer* in an *ordinary stated church*, but with relation unto that church whereof he was, or was to be, an officer. But an *evangelist*, as such, was not especially related unto any one church more than another, though, as the apostles themselves, they might for a time attend unto the work in one place or church rather or more than another. Wherefore, without a call from the Holy Ghost, either immediate by *prophecy* and revelation, or by the direction of persons infallibly inspired, as the apostles were, none can be called to be evangelists, nor yet *to succeed them* under any other name in that office. Wherefore, the primitive church after the apostles' time never once took upon them to constitute or ordain *an evangelist*, as knowing it a thing beyond their rule and out of their power. Men may invade an office when they please, but unless they be called unto it, they must account for their usurpation. And as for those who have erected an office in the church, or an *episcopacy*, principally if not solely out of what is ascribed unto these *evangelists*, namely, to Timothy and Titus, they may be farther attended unto in their claim when they lay the least pretence unto the whole of what is ascribed unto them. But this "doing the work of an evangelist" is that which few men care for or delight in; only their power and authority, in a new kind of managery, many would willingly possess themselves of.

(2.) The *evangelists* we read of had *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Spirit, without which they could not warrantably undertake their office. This we have manifested before. Now, these *extraordinary gifts*, differing not only in *degree* but in *kind* from all those of the *ordinary ministry* of the church, are not at present by any pretended unto; and if any should make such a pretence, it would be an easy matter to convince them of their folly. But without these gifts, men must content themselves with such offices in the church as are stated with respect unto every particular congregation, Acts xiv. 23, xx. 28; Tit. i. 5; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2; Phil. i. 1.

Some, indeed, seem not satisfied whether to derive their claim from Timothy and Titus as *evangelists*, or from the *bishops* that were *ordained* by them or *described* unto them. But whereas those *bishops* were no other but *elders* of particular churches, as is evident,

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beyond a modest denial, from Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 8; Tit. i. 5–9: so certainly they cannot be of both sorts, the one being apparently superior unto the other. If they are *such bishops* as Titus and Timothy ordained, it is well enough known both what is their office, their work, and their duty; if such as they pretend Timothy and Titus to be, they must manifest it in the like *call, gifts,* and *employment,* as they had. For,—

(3.) There are not any now who do pretend unto their *principal employment* by virtue of office, nor can so do; for it is certain that the principal work of the *evangelists* was to go up and down, from one place and nation unto another, to *preach the gospel* unto Jews and Gentiles as yet unconverted, and their commission unto this purpose was as large and extensive as that of the apostles. But who shall now empower any one hereunto? What church, what persons, have received authority to *ordain* any one to be such an *evangelist?* or what rules or directions are given as to their *qualifications,* power, or duty, or how they should be so ordained? It is true, those who are ordained ministers of the gospel, and others also that are the disciples of Christ, may and ought to preach the gospel to unconverted persons and nations as they have opportunity, and are particularly guided by the providence of God; but that any church or person has power or authority to ordain a person unto this office and work cannot be proved.

2. Lastly, The *continuance of the employment* as unto the *settling of new planted churches* is no way necessary; for every church, being planted and settled, is intrusted with power for its own preservation and continuance in due order according to the mind of Christ, and is enabled to do all those things in itself which at first were done under the guidance of the evangelists, nor can any one instance be given wherein they are defective. And where any church was called and gathered in the name of Christ, which had some things yet wanting unto its perfection and complete order, which the *evangelists* were to finish and settle, they did it not but in and by the power of the church itself, only presiding and directing in the things to be done. And if any churches, through their own default, have lost that order and power which they were once established in, as they shall never want power in themselves to recover their pristine estate and condition, who will attend unto their duty according unto rule to that purpose, so this would rather prove a necessity of raising up *new evangelists,* of a new extraordinary ministry, on the defection of churches, than the continuance of them in the church rightly stated and settled.

Besides these *evangelists* there were *prophets* also, who had a *temporary, extraordinary ministry* in the church. Their grant

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from Christ, or institution in the church, is mentioned 1 Cor. xii. 28, Eph. iv. 11; and the exercise of their ministry is declared, Acts xiii. 1, 2. But the names of *prophets* and *prophecy* are used variously in the New Testament: for,—1. Sometimes an *extraordinary office* and *extraordinary gifts* are signified by them; and, 2. Sometimes *extraordinary gifts* only; and, 3. Sometimes an *ordinary office* with *ordinary gifts*, and sometimes *ordinary gifts* only. And unto one of these heads may the use of the word be everywhere reduced.

1. In the places mentioned, *extraordinary officers* endued with *extraordinary gifts* are intended; for they are said to be "set in the church," and are placed in the second rank of officers, next to the apostles, "first apostles, secondarily prophets," 1 Cor. xii. 28, between them and evangelists, Eph. iv. 11. And two things are ascribed unto them:—(1.) That they *received immediate revelations* and directions from the Holy Ghost in things that belonged unto the present duty of the church. Unto them it was that the Holy Ghost revealed his mind, and gave commands concerning the separation of Barnabas and Saul unto their work, Acts xiii. 2. (2.) They foretold things to come, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, wherein the duty or edification of the church was concerned. So Agabus the prophet foretold the famine in the days of Claudius Cæsar, whereon provision was made for "the poor saints at Jerusalem," that they might not suffer by it, Acts xi. 28–30. And the same person afterward prophesied of the bonds and sufferings of Paul at Jerusalem, Acts xxi. 10, 11; and the same thing (it being of the highest concernment unto the church) was, as it should seem, revealed unto the prophets that were in most churches, for so himself gives an account hereof: "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me," Acts xx. 22, 23; that is, in all the cities he passed through where there were churches planted and prophets in them. These things the churches then stood in need of, for their confirmation, direction, and comfort; and were, therefore, I suppose, most of them supplied with such officers for a season,—that is, whilst they were needful. And unto this office, though expressly affirmed to be "set in the church," and placed between the apostles and the evangelists, none, that I know of, do pretend a succession. All grant that they were extraordinary, because their gift and work were so; but so were those of *evangelists* also. But there is no mention of the *power and rule* of those prophets, or else undoubtedly we should have had, on one pretence or other, successors provided for them!

2. Sometimes an *extraordinary gift* without office is intended in this expression. So it is said that Philip the evangelist "had four

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daughters, virgins, which did prophesy," Acts xxi. 9. It is not said that they were *prophetesses*, as there were some under the Old Testament, only that "they did prophesy;" that is, they had revelations from the Holy Ghost occasionally for the use of the church: for to *prophesy* is nothing but to declare hidden and secret things by virtue of immediate revelation, be they of what nature they will; and so is the word commonly used, Matt. xxvi. 68; Luke xxii. 64. So an *extraordinary gift* without office is expressed Acts xix. 6, "When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." Their prophesying, which was their declaration of spiritual things by immediate revelation, was of the same nature with their *speaking with tongues;* both were extraordinary gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost. And of this sort were those *miracles*, *healings*, and *tongues*, which God for a time set in the church, which did not constitute distinct officers in the church, but they were only sundry persons in each church which were endued with these extraordinary gifts for its edification; and therefore are they placed after *teachers*, comprising both, which were the principal sort of the ordinary continuing officers of the church, 1 Cor. xii. 28. And of this sort do I reckon those prophets to be who are treated of, 1 Cor. xiv. 29–33; for that they were neither stated officers in the churches nor yet the brethren of the church promiscuously, but such as had received an especial *extraordinary gift*, is evident from the context. See verses 30, 37.

3. Again, an *ordinary office* with *ordinary gifts* is intended by this expression: Rom. xii. 6, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." Prophecy here can intend nothing but *teaching* or preaching, in the exposition and application of the word; for an *external rule* is given unto it, in that it must be done according to the "proportion of faith," or the sound doctrine of faith revealed in the Scripture. And this ever was, and will ever continue to be, the work and duty of the ordinary teachers of the church, whereunto they are enabled by the gifts of Christ, which they receive by the Holy Ghost, Eph iv. 7, as we shall see more afterward. And hence also those who are not called unto office, who have yet received a gift enabling them to declare the mind of God in the Scripture unto the edification of others, may be said to "prophesy."

And these things I thought meet to interpose, with a brief description of those *officers* which the Lord Jesus Christ granted unto his church *for a season*, at its first planting and establishment, with what belonged unto their office, and the necessity of their work; for the collation of them on the church, and their whole furniture with

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spiritual gifts, was the immediate work of the Holy Ghost, which we are in the declaration of. And withal it was my design to manifest how vain is the pretence of some unto a kind of *succession* unto these officers, who have neither an extraordinary call, nor extraordinary gifts, nor extraordinary employment, but only are pleased to assume an *extraordinary power* unto themselves over the churches and disciples of Christ, and that such as neither evangelists, nor prophets, nor apostles, did ever claim or make use of. But this *matter of power* is fuel in itself unto the proud, ambitious minds of *Diotrephists*, and as now circumstanced, with other advantages, is useful to the corrupt lusts of men; and, therefore, it is no wonder if it be pretended unto and greedily reached after, by such as really have neither call to the ministry, nor gifts for it, nor do employ themselves in it. And, therefore, as in these extraordinary officers and their gifts did consist the original glory and honour of the churches in an especial manner, and by them was their edification carried on and perfected; so by an *empty pretence* unto their *power*, without their order and spirit, the churches have been stained, and deformed, and brought to destruction. But we must return unto the consideration of extraordinary spiritual gifts, which is the especial work before us.

CHAPTER IV.

Extraordinary spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. xii. 4–11.

THIRDLY, Extraordinary *spiritual gifts* were of two sorts:—First, Such as absolutely exceed the whole power and faculties of our minds and souls. These, therefore, did not consist in an *abiding principle* or faculty always resident in them that received them, so as that they could exercise them by virtue of any inherent power and ability. They were so granted unto some persons, in the execution of their office, as that, so often as was needful, they could produce their effects by virtue of an immediate *extraordinary* influence of divine power, transiently affecting their minds. Such was the *gift* of *miracles, healing*, and the like. There were no extraordinary officers but they had these gifts. But yet they could work or operate by virtue of them only as the Holy Ghost gave them *especial direction* for the putting forth of his power in them. So it is said that Paul and Barnabas preaching at Iconium, "the Lord gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands," Acts xiv. 3. The working of signs and miracles is the immediate operation of the Spirit of God, nor can any power or faculty efficiently productive of such effects abide in the souls or

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minds of men. These *miraculous operations* were the *witness of the Holy Ghost* sent down from heaven, which he gave to the truth of the gospel. See Heb. ii. 4, with our exposition thereon. Wherefore, there was no more in these gifts, which *absolutely exceed the whole faculties* of our natures, but the designing of certain persons by the Holy Ghost, in and with whose ministry he would himself effect miraculous operations.

Secondly, They were such as consisted in *extraordinary endowments* and improvements of the faculties of the souls or minds of men; such as *wisdom, knowledge, utterance,* and the like. Now, where these were bestowed on any in an *extraordinary manner*, as they were on the apostles and evangelists, they differed only in *degree* from them that are ordinary and still continued, but are of the *same kind* with them; whereof we shall treat afterward. Now, whereas all these gifts of both sorts are expressly and distinctly enumerated and set down by our apostle in one place, I shall consider them as they are there proposed by him:—

1 Cor. xii. 7–11, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The general concernments of this passage in the apostle were declared, and the context opened, at the beginning of our discourse on this subject. I shall only now consider the especial spiritual gifts that are here enumerated by the apostle, which are *nine* in number, laid down promiscuously without respect unto any order or dependence of one upon another, although it is probable that those *first placed* were the principal, or of principal use in the church.

The first is Λόγος σοφίας,—The "*word of wisdom.*" Λόγος here is of the same signification with דָּבָר in the Hebrew, which often signifies a *thing* or matter; wherefore the "word of wisdom" is nothing but *wisdom itself.* And our inquiry is, What was that *wisdom* which was in those days a peculiar and an especial gift of the Holy Ghost? Our Lord Jesus Christ promised unto his disciples that he would give them "a mouth and wisdom, which all their adversaries should not be able to gainsay nor resist," Luke xxi. 15. This will be our rule in the declaration of the nature of this gift. That which he hath respect unto is the *defence of the gospel* and its truth against powerful persecuting adversaries; for although they had the truth on their side, yet being men ignorant and unlearned, they might justly

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fear that when they were brought before *kings*, and *rulers*, and *priests*, they should be baffled in their profession, and not be able to defend the truth. Wherefore this promise of a "mouth and wisdom" respects spiritual ability and utterance in the defence of the truth of the gospel, when they were called into question about it. Spiritual ability of mind is the *wisdom*, and utterance or freedom of speech is the *mouth* here promised. An eminent instance of the accomplishment hereof we have in Peter and John, Acts iv.; for upon their making a *defence* of the resurrection of Christ, and the truth of the gospel therein, such as their *adversaries* were not able to gainsay nor resist, it is said that when the *rulers and elders saw their παῤῥησίαν*, that is, their *utterance* in defence of their cause with boldness, and so the wisdom wherewith it was accompanied, considering that they were "unlearned and ignorant," they were astonished, and only considered "that they had been with Jesus," verse 13. And he it was who, in the accomplishment of his promise, had given them that spiritual wisdom and utterance which they were not *able to resist*. So it is said expressly of Stephen that his adversaries "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake," Acts vi. 10. Wherefore, this gift of wisdom, in the first place, was a *spiritual skill and ability* to defend the truths of the gospel, when questioned, opposed, or blasphemed. And this *gift* was eminent in those primitive times, when a company of unlearned men were able upon all occasions to *maintain* and defend the truth which they believed and professed before and against doctors, scribes, lawyers, rulers of synagogues, yea, princes and kings, continually so confounding their adversaries, as that, being obstinate in their unbelief, they were forced to cover their *shame* by betaking themselves unto *rage* and bestial fury, Acts vi. 10–14, vii. 54, xxii. 22, 23, as hath been the manner of all their successors ever since.

Now, although this be an *especial kind of wisdom*, an eminent gift of the Holy Ghost, wherein the glory of Christ and honour of the gospel are greatly concerned,—namely, an ability to manage and defend the truth in times of trial and danger, to the confusion of its adversaries,—yet I suppose the wisdom here intended is not absolutely confined thereunto, though it be principally intended. Peter, speaking of Paul's epistles, affirms that they were written "according to the wisdom given unto him," 2 Pet. iii. 15; that is, that *especial gift* of spiritual wisdom for the management of gospel truths unto the edification of the church of Christ which he had received. And he that would understand what this *wisdom* is must be thoroughly conversant in the writings of that apostle: for, indeed, the *wisdom* that he useth in the management of the doctrine of the gospel,—in the due consideration of all persons, occasions, circum-

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stances, temptations of men and churches; of their state, condition, strength or weakness, growth or decays, obedience or failings, their capacities and progress; with the holy accommodation of himself in what he teacheth or delivereth, in meekness, in vehemency, in tenderness, in sharpness, in severe arguings and *pathetical* expostulations; with all other ways and means suited unto his holy ends, in the propagation of the gospel and edification of the church,—is inexpressibly glorious and excellent. All this did he do according to the *singular gift of wisdom* that was bestowed on him. Wherefore, I take the "word of wisdom" here mentioned to be a peculiar spiritual skill and ability *wisely* to manage the gospel in its administration unto the advantage and furtherance of the truth, especially in the defence of it when called unto the trial with its adversaries. This was an *eminent gift* of the Holy Ghost, which, considering the persons employed by him in the ministry, for the most part were known to be unlearned and ignorant, filled the world with amazement, and was an effectual means for the subduing of multitudes unto the obedience of faith. And so eminent was the apostle Paul in this gift, and so successful in the management of it, that his adversaries had nothing to say but that he was subtle, and took men by craft and guile, 2 Cor. xii. 16. The sweetness, condescension, self-denial, holy compliance with all, which he made use of, mixed with truth, gravity, and authority, they would have had to be all craft and guile. And this *gift*, when it is in any measure continued unto any *minister of the gospel*, is of singular use unto the church of God; yea, I doubt not but that the apostle fixed it here in the *first place*, as that which was eminent above all the rest. And as, where it is *too much wanting*, we see what woful mistakes and miscarriages men otherwise good and holy will run themselves into, unto the great disadvantage of the gospel, so the real enjoyment and exercise of it in any competent measure is the life and grace of the ministry. As God filled Bezaleel and Aholiab with *wisdom* for the building of the tabernacle of old, so unless he give this spiritual *wisdom* unto the ministers of the gospel, no *tabernacle* of his will be erected where it is fallen down, nor kept up where it stands. I intend not *secular wisdom* or *civil wisdom*, much less *carnal wisdom*, but a *spiritual ability* to discharge all our duties aright in the ministry committed unto us. And, as was said, where this is wanting, we shall quickly see woful and shameful work made in churches themselves.

I cannot pass by the consideration of this *gift* without offering something that may guide us either in the obtaining or the due exercise of it. And hereunto the things ensuing may be subservient; as,—1. A sense of our own *insufficiency as of ourselves*, as unto any end for which this *wisdom* is requisite. As it is declared that we

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have *no sufficiency* in ourselves for any thing that is good, *all our sufficiency* being of God; so in particular it is denied that we have any for the work of the ministry, in that *interrogation*, containing a negative proposition, "Who is sufficient for these things?" 2 Cor. ii. 16. A sense hereof is the first step towards this *wisdom*, as our apostle expressly declares: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18. Until we discover and are sensible of our own *folly*, we are fit neither to receive nor to use this spiritual wisdom. And the want hereof proves the ruin of many that pretend unto the ministry; and it were to be wished that it were only their own. They come to the work of it full of *pride, self-conceit*, and foolish elation of mind, in an apprehension of their own abilities; which yet, for the most part, are mean and contemptible. This keeps them sufficiently estranged from a sense of that *spiritual wisdom* we treat of. Hence there is nothing of a *gospel ministry* nor its work found among them, but an empty name. And as for those who have reduced all ecclesiastical administrations to *canons, laws, acts, courts*, and *legal processes* in them, they seem to do it with a design to cast off all use of spiritual gifts, yea, to exclude both them and their Author, name and thing, out of the church of God. Is this the wisdom given by the Holy Ghost for the due management of gospel administrations,—namely, that men should get a little skill in some of the worst of human laws and uncomely artifices of intriguing, *secular courts*, which they pride themselves in, and terrify poor creatures with mulcts and penalties that are any way obnoxious unto them? What use these things may be of in the world I know not; unto the church of God they do not belong.

2. Being sensible of our own insufficiency, *earnest prayers* for a supply of this *wisdom* are required in us: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him," James i. 5. There is both a precept and a promise to enforce this duty. That we all want wisdom in ourselves is unquestionable; I mean, as to our concern in the gospel, either to bear testimony unto it in difficulties or to manage the truths of it unto edification. The way for our supply lies plain and open before us, neither is there any other that we can take one step in towards it: "Let us ask it of God, who giveth liberally," and we shall receive it. This was that which rendered Solomon so great and glorious; when he had his choice given him of all desirable things, he made his request for *wisdom* to the discharge of the office and duties of it that God had called him unto. Though it was a *whole kingdom* that he was to rule, yet was his work carnal and of this world, compared with the spiritual administrations

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of the gospel. And hereunto a worldly ministry is no less averse than unto a sense of their own insufficiency. The fruits do sufficiently manifest how much this duty is contemned by them. But the neglect of it,—I say, the neglect of *praying for wisdom* to be enabled unto the discharge of the work of the ministry, and the due management of the truths of the gospel, according as occasions do require,—in them who pretend thereunto, is a fruit of unbelief, yea, of atheism and contempt of God.

3. *Due meditation* on our great *pattern*, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostles, being followers of them as they were of him, is also required hereunto. As in all other things, so, in especial, in his ministry for the revelation of the truth, and giving testimony thereunto, the Lord Jesus was the great pattern and example, God in him representing unto us that *perfection in wisdom* which we ought to aim at. I shall not here in particular look into this heavenly treasury, but only say, that he who would be *really and truly wise in spiritual things*, who would either rightly receive or duly improve this gift of the Holy Ghost, he ought continually to bear in his heart, his mind and affections, this great exemplar and *idea* of it, even the Lord Jesus Christ in his ministry,—namely, what he did, what he spake, how on all occasions his condescension, meekness, and authority did manifest themselves,—until he be changed into the same image and likeness by the Spirit of the Lord. The same is to be done, in their place and sphere, towards the *apostles*, as the principal followers of Christ, and who do most lively represent his graces and wisdom unto us. Their writings, and what is written of them, are to be searched and studied unto this very end, that, considering how they behaved themselves in all instances, on all occasions, in their testimony, and all administrations of the truth, we may endeavour after a conformity unto them, in the participation of the same Spirit with them. It would be no small stay and guidance unto us, if on all occasions we would diligently search and consider what the *apostles* did in such circumstances, or what they would have done, in answer to what is recorded of their spirit and actings; for although this *wisdom* be a gift of the Holy Spirit, yet as we now consider it as it is continued in the church, it may be in part obtained and greatly improved in the due use of the means which are subservient thereunto, provided that in all we depend solely on God for the giving of it, who hath also prescribed these means unto us for the same end.

4. Let them who design a participation of this *gift* take heed it be not *stifled with such vicious habits of mind* as are expressly contrary unto it and destructive of it: such are self-fulness or confidence, hastiness of spirit, promptness to speak and slowness to hear; which

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are the great means which make many abound in their own sense and folly, to be wise in their own conceits, and contemptible in the judgment of all that are truly so. *Ability of speech* in time and season is an especial gift of God, and that eminently with respect unto the spiritual things of the gospel; but a *profluency of speech*, venting itself on all occasions and on no occasions, making men open their mouths wide when indeed they should shut them and open their ears, and to pour out all that they know and what they do not know, making them angry if they are not heard and impatient if they are contradicted, is an unconquerable fortification against all true spiritual wisdom.

5. Let those who would be sharers herein follow after those *gifts* and *graces* which do *accompany it*, promote it, and are inseparable from it: such are *humility*, *meekness*, *patience*, *constancy*, with boldness and confidence in profession; without which we shall be fools in every trial. *Wisdom*, indeed, is none of all these, but it is that which cannot be without them, nor will it thrive in any mind that is not cultivated by them. And he who thinks it is not worth his pains and travail, nor that it will quit cost, to seek after this spiritual wisdom, by a constant watchfulness against the opposite vices mentioned, and attendance unto those concomitant duties and graces, must be content to go without it.

This is the first instance given by our apostle of the spiritual gifts of the primitive times: "To one is given by the Spirit *the word of wisdom.*"

"To another the *word of knowledge* by the same Spirit,"—λόγος γνώσεως. I showed before that λόγος may denote the *thing* itself, the "word of knowledge," that is knowledge; but if any shall suppose that because this *knowledge* was to be expressed unto the church for its edification, it is therefore called a "*word of knowledge*," as a "word of exhortation," or a "word of consolation,"—that is, exhortation or consolation administered by words,—I shall not contend to the contrary. It is *knowledge* that is the gift peculiarly intended in this second place. And we must inquire both *how* it is an especial gift, and of *what sort it is*. And it should seem that it cannot have the nature of an *especial gift*, seeing it is that which was common to all; for so saith the apostle, speaking unto the whole church of the Corinthians, "We know that we all have knowledge," 1 Cor. viii. 1;—and not only so, but he also adds that this *knowledge* is a thing which either in its own nature tends unto an ill issue or is very apt to be abused thereunto; for saith he, "Knowledge puffeth up," for which cause he frequently reflects upon it in other places. But yet we shall find that it is a *peculiar gift*, and in itself singularly useful, however it may be abused, as the best things may be, yea, are most

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liable thereunto. The *knowledge* mentioned in that place by the apostle, which he ascribes in common unto all the church, was only that which concerned "things sacrificed unto idols;" and if we should extend it farther, unto an understanding of the "mystery of the gospel," which was in the community of believers, yet is there place remaining for an *eminency* therein by virtue of an especial spiritual gift. And as to what he adds about "knowledge puffing up," he expounds in the next words: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," verse 2. It is not men's knowledge, but the vain and proud conceit of ignorant men, supposing themselves *knowing and wise*, that so puffeth up and hindereth edification.

Wherefore,—1. By this "word of knowledge," not *that degree of it* which is required in all Christians, in all the members of the church, is intended. Such a measure of knowledge there is necessary both unto faith and confession. Men can believe nothing of that whereof they know nothing, nor can they confess with their mouths what they apprehend not in their minds. But it is somewhat *singular*, *eminent*, and *not common* to all. 2. Neither doth that *eminency* or singularity consist in this, that it is *saving* and sanctifying knowledge which is intended (that there is such a peculiar knowledge, whereby "God shines in the heart of believers" with a spiritual, saving insight into spiritual things, transforming the mind into the likeness of them, I have at large elsewhere declared); for it is reckoned among *gifts*, whereas that other is a *saving grace*, whose difference hath been declared before. It is expressed by the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 2, by "understanding all mysteries and all knowledge;" that is, having an understanding in, and the knowledge of, all mysteries. This knowledge he calleth a *gift* which "shall vanish away," verse 8, and so not belonging absolutely unto that grace which, being a part of the image of God in us, shall go over into eternity. And "knowledge," in verse 2, is taken for the thing known: "Though I understand all knowledge;" which is the same with "all mysteries." Wherefore the knowledge here intended is such a peculiar and especial insight into the mysteries of the gospel, as whereby those in whom it was were enabled to teach and instruct others. Thus the apostle Paul, who had received all these gifts in the highest degree and measure, affirms that by his writing, those to whom he wrote might perceive his "skill and understanding in the mystery of Christ."

And this was in an especial manner necessary unto those *first dispensers of the gospel;* for how else should the church have been instructed in the knowledge of it? This they prayed for them,—namely, that they might be filled with the *knowledge* of the will of God "in all wisdom and understanding," Col. i. 9; Eph. i. 15–20,

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iii. 14–19; Col. ii. 1, 2. The means whereby they might come hereunto was by their instruction; who therefore were to be skilled in a peculiar manner in the knowledge of those mysteries which they were to impart unto others, and to do it accordingly: and so it was with them, Acts xx. 27; Eph. iii. 8, 9; Col. iv. 2–4. Now, although this gift, as to that excellent degree wherein it was in the apostles and those who received the knowledge of Christ and the gospel by *immediate revelation*, be withheld, yet it is still communicated in such a measure unto the ministers of the church as is necessary unto its edification. And for any one to undertake an office in the church who hath not received this gift in some good measure of the knowledge of the mystery of God and the gospel, is to impose himself on that service in the house of God, which he is neither called unto nor fitted for. And whereas we have lived to see all endeavours after an especial acquaintance with the mysteries of the gospel despised or derided by some, it is an evidence of that fatal and fearful apostasy whereinto the generality of Christians are fallen.

Faith is added in the third place: "To another *faith* by the same Spirit." That the saving grace of faith, which is common unto all true believers, is not here intended, is manifest from the context. There is a *faith* in Scripture which is commonly called the "faith of miracles," mentioned by our apostle in this epistle as a principal, extraordinary, spiritual gift: 1 Cor. xiii. 2, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,"—that is, the highest degree of a faith of miracles, or such as would effect miraculous operations of the highest nature. This I should readily admit to be here intended, but that there is mention made of *working miracles* in the next verse, as a gift distinct from this faith. Yet whereas this *working of miracles* is everywhere ascribed to *faith*, and could not be anywhere but where the peculiar faith from which those operations did proceed was first imparted, it is not unlikely but that by "faith" the principle of all miraculous operations may be intended, and by the other expressions the operations themselves. But if the distinction of these gifts be to be preserved, as I rather judge that it ought to be, considering the placing of "faith" immediately upon "wisdom" and "knowledge," I should judge that a peculiar confidence, boldness, and assurance of mind in the profession of the gospel and the administration of its ordinances is here intended. "Faith," therefore, is that παῤῥησία ἐν πίστει, that *freedom*, confidence, and "boldness in the faith," or profession of the faith, "which is in Christ Jesus," mentioned by the apostle, 1 Tim. iii. 13; that is, our ὑπόστασις, or "confidence" in profession, whose "beginning we are to hold steadfast unto the end," Heb. iii. 14. And we do see how *excellent a gift* this is on all occasions. When troubles and trials do befall the church upon

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the account of its profession, many, even true believers, are very ready to faint and despond, and some to draw back, at least for a season, as others do utterly, to the perdition of their souls. In this state the eminent usefulness of this *gift of boldness in the faith*, of an assured confidence in profession, of an especial faith, to go through troubles and trials, is known unto all. Ofttimes the eminence of it in one single person hath been the means to preserve a whole church from coldness, backsliding, or sinful compliances with the world. And where God stirreth up any one unto some great or singular work in his church, he constantly endows them with this *gift of faith*. So was it with Luther, whose undaunted courage and resolution in profession, or boldness in the faith, was one of the principal means of succeeding his great undertaking. And there is no more certain sign of churches being forsaken of Christ in a time of trial than if this gift be withheld from them, and pusillanimity, fearfulness, with carnal wisdom, do spring up in the room of it. The work and effects of this faith are expressed, 1 Cor. xvi. 13, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." So also Eph. vi. 10; 2 Tim. ii. 1. And the especial way whereby it may be attained or improved, is *by a diligent, careful discharge, at all times, of all the duties of the places we hold in the church*, 1 Pet. v. 1–4.

The gifts of healing are nextly mentioned: Χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων,—"To another the *gifts of healing* by the same Spirit." So they are again expressed, 1 Cor. xii. 28, in the *plural number*, because of their free communication unto *many* persons. These *healings* respected those that were sick, in their sudden and miraculous recovery from long or deadly distempers, by the imposition of hands in the name of the Lord Jesus. And as many of the "mighty works" of Christ himself, for the reasons that shall be mentioned, consisted in these "healings," so it was one of the first things which he gave in commission to his apostles, and furnished them with power for, whilst they attended on him in his personal ministry, Matt. x. 1. So also did he to the *seventy*, making it the principal sign of the approach of the kingdom of God, Luke x. 9. And the same power and virtue he promised to believers,—namely, that they should "lay hands on the sick and recover them," after his ascension. Of the accomplishment of this promise and the exercise of this power, the story of the Acts of the Apostles giveth us many instances, chap. iii. 7, v. 15, ix. 33, 34. And two things are observed singular in the exercise of this gift: as, first, that many were cured by the shadow of Peter as he passed by, chap. v. 15; and again, many were so by handkerchiefs or aprons carried from the body of Paul, chap. xix. 12. And the reason of these extraordinary operations in extraordinary cases seems to have been, the encouragement of that great faith which was then stirred

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up in them that beheld those miraculous operations; which was of singular advantage unto the propagation of the gospel, as the *magical* superstition of the Roman church, sundry ways endeavouring to imitate these inimitable actings of sovereign divine power, hath been a dishonour to Christian religion.

But whereas these "healings" were *miraculous operations*, it may be inquired why the *gift of them* is constantly distinguished from "*miracles*," and placed as a distinct effect of the Holy Ghost by itself; for that so it is, is evident both in the commission of Christ granting this power unto his disciples, and in the annumeration of these gifts in this and other places. I answer, this seems to be done on a threefold account: 1. Because *miracles* absolutely were a sign unto them that *believed not*, as the apostle speaketh of "tongues;" they were "a sign, not unto them that believed, but unto them that believed not," 1 Cor. xiv. 22,—that is, they served for their conviction: but this work of *healing* was a *sign unto believers themselves*, and that on a double account; for,—(1.) The pouring out of this gift of the Holy Ghost was a peculiar sign and token of the *coming of the kingdom of God*. So saith our Saviour to his disciples, "Heal the sick, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you," Luke x. 9; this gift of healing being a token and pledge thereof. This sign did our Saviour give of it himself when John sent his disciples unto him to inquire, for their own satisfaction, not his, whether he were the Messiah or no: Matt. xi. 4, 5, "Go," saith he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, and the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them;" which was the evidence of his own being the Messiah, and bringing in the kingdom of God. The Jews have an ancient tradition, that in the days of the Messiah *all things shall be healed but the serpent*. And there is a truth in what they say, although for their parts they understand it not; for *all are healed by Christ but the serpent and his seed*,—the wicked, unbelieving world. And hereof,—namely, of the healing and recovery of all things by Christ,—was this gift a sign unto the church. Wherefore he began his ministry, after his first miracle, with "healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people," Matt. iv. 23–25. (2.) It was a sign that Christ had *borne and taken away sin*, which was the cause, root, and spring of diseases and sicknesses; without which no one could have been miraculously cured. Hence that place of Isaiah, chap. liii. 4, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" which is afterward interpreted by being "wounded for our transgressions," and being "bruised for our iniquities," verse 5; as also by Peter, by his "bearing our sins in his

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own body on the tree," 1 Epist. ii. 24; is applied by Matthew unto the curing of diseases and sicknesses, Matt. viii. 16, 17. Now, this was for no other reason but because this *healing of diseases* was a sign and effect of his *bearing our sins*, the causes of them; without a supposition whereof *healing* would have been *a false witness* unto men. It was, therefore, on these accounts, a *sign unto believers also.*

2. Because it had a peculiar *goodness, relief*, and *benignity* towards mankind in it, which other miraculous operations had not, at least not unto the same degree. Indeed, this was one great difference between the *miraculous operations* that were wrought under the old testament and those under the new, that the former generally consisted in dreadful and tremendous works, bringing astonishment and ofttimes ruin to mankind, but those others were generally *useful* and *beneficial* unto all. But this of *healing* had a peculiar evidence of *love, kindness*, compassion, benignity, and was suited greatly to affect the minds of men with regard and gratitude; for long *afflictive distempers* or *violent pains*, such as were the diseases cured by this gift, do prepare the minds of men, and those concerned in them, greatly to value their deliverance. This, therefore, in an especial manner, declared and evidenced the goodness, love, and compassion of Him that was the author of this gospel, and gave this sign of healing spiritual diseases by healing of bodily distempers. And, doubtless, many who were made partakers of the benefit hereof were greatly affected with it;—and that not only unto "walking, and leaping, and praising God," as the cripple did who was cured by Peter and John, Acts iii. 8; but also unto faith and boldness in profession, as it was with the blind man healed by our Saviour himself, John ix. 30–33, 38, etc. But yet no outward effects of themselves can work upon the hearts of men, so as that all who are made partakers of them should be brought unto *faith, thankfulness*, and *obedience.* Hence did not only our Saviour himself observe, that of *ten* at once cleansed by him from their leprosy, but *one* returned to give glory to God, Luke xvii. 17; but he whom he cured of a *disease* that he had suffered under eight and thirty years, notwithstanding a solemn admonition given him by our blessed Saviour, turned *informer* against him, and endeavoured to betray him unto the Jews, John v. 5–16. It is effectual grace alone which can change the heart; without which it will continue obstinate and unbelieving, under not only the sight and consideration of the most miraculous outward operations, but also the participation in ourselves of the benefits and fruits of them. Men may have their *bodies* cured by *miracles* when their *souls* are not cured by *grace.*

3. It is thus placed distinctly by itself, and not cast under the common head of "miracles," because ordinarily there were some *out-*

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ward means and tokens of it, that were to be made use of in the exercise of this gift. Such were,—(1.) *Imposition of hands.* Our Saviour himself in healing of the sick did generally "lay his hands on them," Matt. ix. 18; Luke iv. 40. And he gave the same order unto his disciples, that they should "lay their hands on those that were sick, and heal them;" which was practised by them accordingly. (2.) *Anointing with oil:* "They anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them," Mark vi. 13. And the *elders* of the church, with whom this gift was continued, were to come to him that was sick, and praying over him, "anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord," and he should be saved, James v. 14, 15. Some do contend for the continuance of this ceremony, or the *anointing* of them that are sick by the elders of the church, but without ground or warrant: for although it be their duty *to pray in a particular manner* for those that are *sick* of their flocks, and it be the duty of them who are *sick*, to call for them unto that purpose, yet the application of the outward ceremony being instituted, not as a means of an *uncertain cure*, as all are which work naturally unto that end, but as a pledge and token of a *certain healing* and recovery, where there is not an infallible faith thereof, when the healing may not ensue, it is to turn an ordinance into a lie; for if a recovery follow *ten* times on this *anointing*, if it once fall out otherwise, the institution is rendered a lie, a false testimony, and the other recoveries manifested to have had no dependence on the observation of it. For these reasons, I judge that this gift of *healing*, though belonging unto miraculous operations in general, is everywhere reckoned as a *distinct gift* by itself. And from that place of James I am apt to think that this gift was communicated in an especial manner unto the *elders of churches*, even that were ordinary and fixed, it being of so great use and such singular comfort unto them that were poor and persecuted; which was the condition of many churches and their members in those days.

Miracles ensue in the fifth place: Ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων,—"Effectual working of mighty powers," or "powerful works." For the signification of this word, here rendered "*miracles*," the reader may consult our Exposition on Heb. ii. 4. I shall not thence transcribe what is already declared, nor is any thing necessary to be added thereunto. Concerning this *gift of miracles* we have also spoken before in general, so that we shall not much farther here insist upon it; neither is it necessary that we should here treat of the nature, end, and use of miracles in general, which in part also hath been done before. Wherefore I shall only observe some few things as to the *gift* itself, and the use of it in the church; which alone are our present concernment. And,—

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1. As we before observed, this gift did not consist in any *inherent power* or faculty of the mind, so as that those who had received it should have an ability of their own to work or effect such miracles when and as they saw good. As this is disclaimed by the apostles, Acts iii. 12, so a supposition of it would overthrow the very nature of miracles: for a miracle is an immediate effect of *divine power*, exceeding all created abilities; and what is not so, though it may be strange or wonderful, is no miracle. Only Jesus Christ had in his own person a power of working miracles when, and where, and how he pleased, because "God was with him," or "the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily."

2. Unto the working of every miracle in particular, there was a *peculiar act of faith* required in them that wrought it. This is that faith which is called "the faith of miracles:" "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains," 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Now, this faith was not a strong *fixing of the imagination* that such a thing should be done, as some have blasphemously dreamed; nor was it a faith resting merely on the promises of the word, making particular application of them unto times, seasons, and occasions, wherein it no way differs from the ordinary grace of faith;—but this was the true nature of it, that as it was in general resolved into the *promises of the word*, and power of Christ declared therein, that such and such things should be wrought in general, so it had always a *peculiar, immediate revelation* for its warranty and security in the working of any miracle. And without such an *immediate revelation* or divine impulse and impression, all attempts of miraculous operations are vain, and means only for Satan to insinuate his delusions by.

No man, therefore, could work any *miracle*, nor attempt in faith so to do, without an *immediate revelation* that divine power should be therein exerted, and put forth in its operation. Yet do I not suppose that it was necessary that this inspiration and *revelation* should in *order of time* precede the acting of this faith, though it did the operation of the miracle itself; yea, the inspiration itself consisted in the *elevation of faith* to apprehend divine power in such a case for such an end, which the Holy Ghost granted not to any but when he designed so to work. Thus Paul at once acted faith, apprehended divine power, and at the same time struck Elymas the sorcerer blind by a miraculous operation, Acts xiii. 9–11. Being "filled with the Holy Ghost," verse 9,—that is, having received an impression and warranty from him,—he put forth that act of faith at whose presence the Holy Spirit would effect that miraculous operation which he believed. Wherefore this was the nature of this gift: Some persons were by the Holy Ghost endowed with that *especial faith* which was prepared to receive impressions and intimations of his putting forth his power in this or that miraculous operation. Those who had this

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faith could not work miracles *when*, and *where*, and *how* they pleased; only they could *infallibly signify* what the Holy Ghost would do, and so were the outward instruments of the execution of his power.

3. Although the *apostles* had all gifts of the Spirit in an eminent degree and manner, above all others, as Paul saith, "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all," yet it appears that there were some *other persons* distinct from them who had this gift of working miracles in a peculiar manner; for it is not only here reckoned as a peculiar, distinct gift of the Holy Ghost, but also the persons who had received it are reckoned as distinct from the *apostles* and other officers of the church, 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29. Not that I think this gift did constitute them officers in the church, enabling them to exercise power in gospel administrations therein; only they were *brethren of the church*, made eminent by a participation of this gift, for the end whereunto it was ordained. By these persons' ministry did the Holy Spirit, on such occasions as seemed meet to his infinite wisdom, effect miraculous operations, besides what was done in the same kind by the apostles and evangelists all the world over.

4. *The use of this gift* in the church at that time and season was manifold: for the principles which believers proceeded on, and the doctrines they professed, were *new and strange* to the world, and such as had mighty prejudices raised against them in the minds of men; the persons by whom they were maintained and asserted were generally, as to their outward condition, poor and contemptible in the world; the churches themselves, as to their members, few in number, encompassed with multitudes of scoffers and persecuting idolaters, themselves also newly converted, and many of them but weak in the faith. In this state of things, this *gift of miracles* was exceeding useful, and necessary unto the propagation of the gospel, the vindication of the truth, and the establishment of them that did believe; for,—(1.) By miracles occasionally wrought, the people round about who yet believed not were called in, as it were, unto a due consideration of what was done and what was designed thereby. Thus when the noise was first spread abroad of the apostles speaking with tongues, the "multitude came together, and were confounded," Acts ii. 6. So the multitude gathered together at Lystra upon the curing of the cripple by Paul and Barnabas, thinking them to have been gods, Acts xiv. 11. When, therefore, any were so amazed with seeing the miracles that were wrought, hearing that they were so in the confirmation of the doctrine of the gospel, they could not but inquire with diligence into it, and cast out those prejudices which before they had entertained against it. (2.) They gave *authority* unto the ministers of the church; for whereas on outward accounts they were *despised* by the great, wise, and learned

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men of the world, it was made evident by these divine operations that their ministry was of God, and what they taught approved by him. And where these two things were effected,—namely, that a sufficient, yea, an eminently cogent ground and reason was given why men should impartially inquire into the doctrine of the gospel, and an evidence given that the *teachers* of it were approved of God,—unless men were signally captivated under the power of Satan, 2 Cor. iv. 4, or given up of God judicially unto blindness and hardness of heart, it could not be but that the prejudices which they had of themselves, or might receive from others, against the gospel, must of necessity be prevailed against and conquered. And as many of the Jews were so hardened and blinded at that time, Rom. xi. 7–10, 1 Thess. ii. 14–16, so it is marvellous to consider with what *artifices* Satan bestirred himself among the *Gentiles*, by false and lying signs and wonders, with many other ways, to take off from the testimony given unto the gospel by these miraculous operations. And this was that which *miracles* were designed unto towards *unbelievers*,—namely, to take away *prejudices* from the doctrine of the gospel and the persons by whom it was taught, so disposing the minds of men unto an attendance unto it and the reception of it: for they were never means instituted of God for the *ingenerating of faith* in any, but only to provoke and prevail with men to attend unprejudicately unto that whereby it was to be wrought; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," Rom. x. 17. And, therefore, whatever miracles were wrought, if the word preached was not received, if that did not accompany them in its powerful operation, they were but despised. Thus, whereas some, upon hearing the apostles speak with tongues, mocked, and said, "These men are full of new wine," Acts ii. 13; yet upon preaching of the word, which ensued, they were converted unto God. And the apostle Paul tells us that if there were nothing but miraculous speaking with tongues in the church, an unbeliever coming in would say they were all mad, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, who by the word of prophecy would be convinced, judged, and converted unto God, verses 24, 25. (3.) They were of singular use to confirm and establish in the faith those who were weak and newly converted; for whereas they were assaulted on every hand by Satan, the world, and it may be their dearest relations, and that with contempt, scorn, and cruel mocking, it was a singular confirmation and establishment, to behold the *miraculous operations* which were wrought in the approbation of the doctrine which they did profess. Hereby was a sense of it more and more let into and impressed on their minds, until, by an habitual experience of its goodness, power, and efficacy, they were established in the truth.

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Prophecy is added in the sixth place: Ἄλλῳ δὲ προφητεία,—"To another *prophecy;*" that is, is given by the same Spirit. Of this *gift of prophecy* we have sufficiently treated before. Only, I take it here in its largest sense, both as it signifies *a faculty of prediction*, or foretelling things future upon divine revelation, or an ability to declare the mind of God from the word, by the especial and immediate revelation of the Holy Ghost. The first of these was more rare, the latter more ordinary and common. And it may be there were few churches wherein, besides their elders and teachers, by virtue of their office, there were not some of these prophets. So of those who had this gift of prophecy, enabling them in an eminent manner to declare the mind of God from the Scriptures unto the edification of the church, it is expressed that there were some of them in the church at Antioch, Acts xiii. 1, 2, and many of them in the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. xiv.: for this gift was of singular use in the church, and, therefore, as to the end of the edification thereof, is preferred by our apostle above all other gifts of the Spirit whatever, 1 Cor. xii. 31, chap. xiv. 1, 39; for it had a double use,—1. The *conviction and conversion* of such as came in occasionally into their church assemblies. Those unto whom the propagation of the gospel was principally committed went up and down the world, laying hold on all occasions to preach it unto Jews and Gentiles as yet unconverted; and where churches were gathered and settled, the principal work of their teachers was to *edify them* that did believe; but whereas some would come in among them into their church assemblies, perhaps out of curiosity, perhaps out of worse designs, the apostle declares that of all the ordinances of the church, this of prophecy was suited unto the conviction and conversion of all unbelievers, and is ofttimes blessed thereunto, whereby this and that man are born in Zion. 2. This *exposition and application* of the word by many, and that by virtue of an extraordinary assistance of the Spirit of God, was of singular use in the church itself; for if all Scripture given by inspiration from God, so expounded and applied, be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," the more the church enjoyeth thereof, the more will its faith, love, obedience, and consolation be increased. Lastly, *the manner of the exercise* of this gift in the church unto edification is prescribed and limited by our apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 29–33. And, (1.) He would not have the church burdened even with the *most profitable gift* or its exercise, and therefore determines that at one time not above two or three be suffered to speak,—that is, one after another,—that the church be neither wearied nor burdened, verse 29. (2.) Because it was possible that some of them who had this gift might *mix somewhat of their own spirits* in their word and ministry, and

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therein mistake and err from the truth, he requires that the others who had the like gift, and so were understanding in the mind of God, should *judge* of what was spoken by them, so as that the church might not be led into any error by them: "Let the other judge." (3.) That order be observed in their exercise, and especially that way be given unto any *immediate revelation*, and no confusion be brought into the church by many speaking at the same time. And this direction manifests that the gift was *extraordinary*, and is now ceased; though there be a continuance of ordinary gifts of the same kind, and to the same end, in the church, as we shall see afterward, verse 30. (4.) By the observation of this *order*, the apostle shows that *all the prophets might exercise their gift* unto the instruction and consolation of the church in a proper season, such as their *frequent assemblies* would afford them, verse 31. And whereas it may be objected that these things coming in an *extraordinary immediate manner* from the Holy Ghost, it was not in the power of them who received them to confine them unto the order prescribed, which would seem to limit the Holy Spirit in his operations, whereas they were all to speak as the Spirit gave them ability and utterance, let what would ensue, the apostle assures them by a general principle that no such thing would follow on a due use and exercise of this gift: "For God," saith he, "is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints," verse 33. As if he should have said, "If such a course should be taken, that any one should speak and prophesy as he pretended himself to be moved by the Spirit, and to have none to judge of what he said, all *confusion*, tumult, and disorder, would ensue thereon. But *God is the author* of no such thing; gives no such gifts, appoints no such exercise of them, as would tend thereunto." But how shall this be prevented, seeing these things are *extraordinary*, and not in our own power? Yea, saith he, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets," verse 32. By "the spirits of the prophets," that their spiritual gift and ability for its exercise are intended, none doth question. And whereas the apostle had taught two things concerning the exercise of this gift,—(1.) That it ought to be *orderly*, to avoid confusion; (2.) That what proceedeth from it ought to be *judged by others;*—he manifests that both these may be observed, "because the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets;" that is, both their spiritual gift is so in their own power as that they might dispose themselves unto its exercise with choice and judgment, so as to preserve order and peace, not being acted as with an *enthusiastical affiation*, and carried out of their own power. This gift in its exercise was subject unto their own judgment, choice, and understanding; so what they expressed by virtue of their spiritual gift was sub-

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ject to be *judged of* by the other *prophets* that were in the church. Thus were the peace and order of the church to be preserved, and the edification of it to be promoted.

Discerning of spirits is the next gift of the Spirit here enumerated: "Αλλῳ δὲ διακρίσεις πνευμάτων,—"To another *discerning of spirits*," the ability and faculty of judging of spirits, the *dijudication of spirits*. This gift I have, upon another occasion, formerly given an account of, and therefore shall here but briefly touch upon it. All gospel administrations were in those days avowedly executed by virtue of *spiritual gifts*. No man then durst set his hand unto this work but such as either really had or highly pretended unto a participation of the Holy Ghost; for the administration of the gospel is the *dispensation of the Spirit*. This, therefore, was pleaded by all in the preaching of the word, whether in private assemblies or publicly to the world. But it came also then to pass, as it did in all ages of the church, that where God gave unto any the extraordinary gifts of his Spirit, for the reformation or edification of the church, there Satan suborned some to make a pretence thereunto, unto its trouble and destruction. So was it under the old testament, and so was it foretold that it should be under the new. So the apostle Peter, having declared the nature and excellency, use and certainty, of that prophecy which was of old, 2 Pet. i. 19–21, adds thereunto, "But there were false prophets also among the people," chap. ii. 1; that is, when God granted that signal privilege unto the church of the immediate revelation of his will unto them by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which constituted men *true prophets* of the Lord, Satan stirred up others to pretend unto the same *spirit of prophecy* for his own malicious ends, whereby "there were false prophets also among the people." But it may be it will be otherwise now, under the gospel church-state. "No," saith he; "there shall be false teachers among you,"—that is, persons pretending to the same *spiritual gift* that the apostles and evangelists had, yet bringing in thereby "damnable heresies." Now, all their damnable opinions they fathered upon immediate *revelations* of the Spirit. This gave occasion to the holy apostle John to give that caution, with his reason of it, which is expressed, 1 Epist. iv. 1–3; which words we have opened before. And this false pretence unto *extraordinary spiritual gifts* the church was tried and pestered withal so long as there was any occasion to give it countenance,—namely, whilst such gifts were really continued unto any therein. What way, then, had God ordained for the preservation and safety of the church, that it should not be imposed upon by any of these *delusions*? I answer, There was a *standing rule* in the church, whereby whatsoever was or could be offered *doctrinally* unto it might certainly and infallibly

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be tried, judged, and determined on. And this was the *rule of the written word*, according to that everlasting ordinance, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. This, in all ages, was sufficient for the preservation of the church from all errors and heresies, or damnable doctrines; which it never fell into, nor shall do so, but in the sinful neglect and contempt hereof. Moreover, the apostle farther directs the application of this rule unto present occasions, by advising us to fix on *some fundamental principles* which are likely to be opposed, and if they are not owned and avowed, to avoid such teachers, whatever spiritual gift they pretend unto, 1 John iv. 2, 3; 2 John 9–11. But yet, because many in those days were *weak* in the faith, and might be surprised with such pretences, God had graciously provided and bestowed the gift here mentioned on *some*, it may be in every church,—namely, of *discerning of spirits*. They could, by virtue of the extraordinary gift and aid therein of the Holy Ghost, make a true judgment of the *spirits* that men pretended to act and to be acted by, whether they were of God or no. And this was of singular use and benefit unto the church in those days; for as *spiritual gifts* abounded, so did a *pretence* unto them, which was always accompanied with pernicious designs. Herein, therefore, did God grant relief for them who were either less skilful, or less wary, or less able on any account to make a right judgment between those who were really endowed with extraordinary gifts of the Spirit and those who falsely pretended thereunto; for these persons received this gift, and were placed in the church for this very end, that they might guide and help them in making a right judgment in this matter. And whereas the communication of these gifts is ceased, and consequently all pretences unto them, unless by some persons *phrenetical* and *enthusiastical*, whose madness is manifest to all, there is no need of the continuance of this gift of "discerning of spirits;" that standing infallible rule of the *word*, and ordinary assistance of the Spirit, being every way sufficient for our preservation in the truth, unless we give up ourselves to the conduct of corrupt lusts, pride, self-conceit, carnal interest, passions, and temptations, which ruin the souls of men.

The two spiritual gifts here remaining are, *speaking with tongues, and their interpretation*. The first communication of this "gift of tongues" unto the apostles is particularly described, Acts ii. 1–4, etc. And although they were at that time endued with all other gifts of the Holy Ghost, called "power from above," Acts i. 8, yet was this "gift of tongues" signalized by the *visible pledge* of it, the joint participation of the same gift by all, and the notoriety of the matter thereon, as in that place of the Acts is at large described. And God

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seems to have laid the foundation of preaching the gospel in this gift for two reasons:—1. To signify that the grace and mercy of the covenant was now no longer to be *confined unto one nation, language, or people,* but to be extended unto all nations, tongues, and languages of people under heaven. 2. To testify by *what means* he would subdue the souls and consciences of men unto the obedience of Christ and the gospel, and by *what means* he would maintain his kingdom in the world. Now, this was not by force and might, by external power or armies, but by the preaching of the word, whereof the *tongue* is the only instrument. And the outward sign of this gift, in *tongues of fire,* evidenced the *light* and *efficacy* wherewith the Holy Ghost designed to accompany the dispensation of the gospel. Wherefore, although this gift began with the apostles, yet was it afterward very much *diffused* unto the generality of them that did believe. See Acts x. 46, xix. 6; 1 Cor. xiv. 1–27. And some few things we may observe concerning this gift; as,—1. The especial matter that was expressed by this gift seems to have been the praises of God for his wonderful works of grace by Christ. Although I doubt not but that the apostles were enabled, by virtue of this gift, to *declare the gospel* unto any people unto whom they came in their own language, yet, ordinarily, they did not preach nor instruct the people by virtue of this gift, but only *spake forth the praises of God,* to the admiration and astonishment of them who were yet strangers to the faith. So when they first received the gift, they were heard "speaking the wonderful works of God," Acts ii. 11; and the Gentiles who first believed "spake with tongues, and magnified God," Acts x. 46. 2. These *tongues* were so given "for a sign unto them that believed not," 1 Cor. xiv. 22, that sometimes those that spake with tongues understood not the sense and meaning of the words delivered by themselves, nor were they understood by the church itself wherein they were uttered, verses 2, 6–11, etc. But this, I suppose, was only *sometimes,* and that, it may be, mostly when this gift was unnecessarily used; for I doubt not but the apostles understood full well the things delivered by themselves in divers tongues. And all who had this gift, though they might not apprehend the meaning of what themselves spake and uttered, yet were so absolutely, in the exercise of it, under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, that they neither did nor could speak any thing by virtue thereof but what was according unto the mind of God, and tended unto his praise, verses 2, 14, 17. 3. Although this gift was excellent in itself, and singularly effectual in the propagation of the gospel unto unbelievers, yet in the *assemblies of the church* it was of little or no use, but only with respect unto the things themselves that were uttered; for as to the principal end of it, to be a *sign* unto unbelievers, it was finished

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and accomplished towards them, so as they had no farther need or use of it. But now, whereas many *unbelievers* came occasionally into the assemblies of the church, especially at some freer seasons, for whose conviction the Holy Ghost would for a season continue this gift among believers, that the church might not be disadvantaged thereby, he added the other gift here mentioned,—namely, "the interpretation of tongues." He endowed either those persons themselves who spake with tongues, or some others in the same assembly, with an ability to *interpret* and declare to the church the things that were spoken and uttered in that miraculous manner; which is the last gift here mentioned. But the nature, use, and abuse of these gifts is so largely and distinctly spoken unto by the apostle, 1 Cor. xiv. 1–27, that as I need not insist on them, so I cannot fully do it without an entire exposition of that whole chapter, which the nature of my design will not permit.

CHAPTER V.

The original, duration, use, and end, of extraordinary spiritual gifts.

THIS summary account doth the apostle give of these *extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost* which then flourished in the church, and were the life of its extraordinary ministry. It may be mention may occur of some such gifts under other names, but they are such as may be reduced unto some one of those here expressed. Wherefore this may be admitted as a perfect *catalogue* of them, and comprehensive of that *power* from above which the Lord Christ promised unto his apostles and disciples upon his ascension into heaven, Acts i. 8; for he "ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," Eph. iv. 10, that is, the church with *officers* and *gifts*, unto the perfection of the saints, by the work of the ministry, and the edification of his body, verse 12: for being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he shed forth, or abundantly poured out, those things whereof we speak, Acts ii. 33. And as they were the great evidences of his acceptation with God, and exaltation, seeing in them the Spirit "convinced the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," so they were the great means whereby he carried on his work amongst men, as shall afterward be declared.

There was no *certain limited* time for the cessation of these gifts. Those peculiar unto the apostles were commensurate unto their lives. None after their decease had either apostolical office, power, or gifts. The like may be said of the evangelists. Nor have we any

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undoubted testimony that any of those gifts which were truly *miraculous*, and every way above the faculties of men, were communicated unto any after the expiration of the generation of them who conversed with Christ in the flesh, or those who received the Holy Ghost by their ministry. It is not unlikely but that God might on some occasions, for a longer season, put forth his power in some miraculous operations; and so he yet may do, and perhaps doth sometimes. But the *superstition* and folly of some ensuing ages, inventing and divulging innumerable miracles false and foolish, proved a most disadvantageous prejudice unto the gospel, and a means to open a way unto Satan to impose endless delusions upon Christians; for as true and real miracles, with becoming circumstances, were the great means that won and reconciled a regard and honour unto Christian religion in the world, so the pretence of such as either were absolutely false, or such as whose occasions, ends, matter, or manner, were unbecoming the greatness and holiness of Him who is the true author of all miraculous operations, is the greatest dishonour unto religion that any one can invent. But although all these gifts and operations *ceased* in some respect, some of them absolutely, and some of them as to the immediate manner of communication and degree of excellency; yet so far as the edification of the church was concerned in them, something that is *analogous* unto them was and is continued. He who gave "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists," gave also "some pastors and teachers." And as he furnished the former with *extraordinary gifts*, so as far as any thing of the like kind is needful for the continual edification of the church, he bestows it on the latter also, as shall be declared.

And these gifts of the Spirit, added unto his grace in real holiness, were the glory, honour, and beauty of the church of old. Men have but deceived themselves and others when they have feigned a glory and beauty of the church in other things. And whatever any think or say, where these gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are the ornaments of the church, her "clothing of wrought gold," and her "raiment of needlework," are neglected and lost, and they think to adorn her with the *meretricious paint of pompous ceremonies*, with outward grandeur, wealth, and power, she is utterly fallen from her chastity, purity, and integrity. But it is evident that this is the state of many churches in the world; which are therefore worldly and carnal, not spiritual or evangelical. Power, and force, and wealth,—the *gifts*, in this case, of *another spirit*,—under various pretences and names, are their life and glory; indeed their death and shame. I deny not but that it is lawful for ministers of the gospel to enjoy *earthly possessions*, which they do attain by any commendable way among other men. Neither are they required, unless in

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extraordinary cases, to part with the right and use of their temporal goods because they are so ministers of Christ; though those who are so indeed will not deny but that they ought to use them in a peculiar manner unto the glory of Christ and honour of the gospel, beyond other men. Neither shall I ever question that wherein the Scripture is so express, namely, that those who "labour in the word and doctrine" should have a convenient, yea, an honourable subsistence provided for them, according to the best ability of the church, for their work's sake. It is in like manner also granted that the Lord Christ hath committed all that *power* which, with respect unto the edification of the church, he will exercise in this world unto the church itself, as it cannot, without a virtual renunciation of the gospel and faith in Christ Jesus as the head and king of the church, be supposed that this power is any other but spiritual, over the souls and consciences of men; and therefore cannot this *power be exercised*, or be any way made effectual, but by virtue of the spiritual gifts we treat of: but for men to turn this *spiritual power*, to be exercised only by virtue of *spiritual gifts*, into an external coercive power over the persons, bodies, liberties, and lives of men, to be exercised by law-courts, in ways, forms, manners, utterly foreign to the gospel and all evangelical administrations, without the least pretence unto or appearance of the exercise of the gifts of the Holy Ghost therein; yea, and by persons by whom they are hated and derided, acting with pride, scorn, and contempt of the disciples of Christ and over them, being utterly ignorant of the true nature and use of all gospel administrations,—this is to disorder the church, and instead of a house of spiritual worship, in some instances to turn it into "a den of thieves." Where hereunto there are, moreover, annexed earthly revenues, containing all food and fuel of corrupt lusts, with all things satisfactory unto the minds of worldly, sensual men, as a meet reward of these carnal administrations,—as it is at this day in the *church of Rome*,—there all use of the gifts of the Holy Ghost is excluded, and the church is brought into extreme desolation. And although these things are as contrary to the gospel as darkness is to light, yet the world, for many reasons not now to be insisted on, being *willing to be deceived* in this matter, it is generally apprehended that there is nothing so pernicious unto the church, so justly to be watched against and rooted out, as a dislike of their horrible apostasies, in the corrupt depravation of all evangelical administrations. This was not the state, this was not the condition, of the primitive churches; their *life* consisted in the *grace* of the Spirit, and their *glory* in his *gifts*. None of their leaders once dreamed of that new kind of beauty, glory, and power, consisting in numberless superstitious ceremonies, instead of religious worship;

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worldly grandeur, instead of humility and self-denial; and open *tyranny* over the consciences and persons of men, in the room of spiritual authority, effectual in the power of Christ, and by virtue of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

There are many sore *divisions* at this day in the world among and between the professors of Christian religion, both about the doctrine and worship of the gospel, as also the discipline thereof. That these *divisions* are evil in themselves, and the cause of great evils, hinderances of the gospel, and all the effects thereof in the world, is acknowledged by all; and it is a thing, doubtless, to be greatly lamented, that the generality of them who are called Christians are departed from the great rule of "keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He who doth not pray always, who is not ready with his utmost endeavour to remedy this evil, to remove this great obstruction of the benefit of the gospel, is scarce worthy the name of a Christian. The *common way* insisted on unto this end is, that those who have most force and power should set up *standards* and *measures* of agreement, compelling others, by all ways of severity and violence, to a compliance therewith; judging them the highest offenders who shall refuse so to do, because the determining and settling of this matter is committed unto them. This is the way of Antichrist and those who follow him therein. Others, with more moderation and wisdom, but with as little *success*, do or have endeavoured the *reconciliation* of the parties at variance, some, more or all of them, by certain middle ways of mutual condescension which they have found out. Some things they *blame*, and some things they *commend* in all; some things they would have them do, and some things omit: all for the sake of peace and love. And this design carries with it so fair and pleadable a pretence, that those who are once engaged in it are apt to think that *they alone* are the true lovers of Christianity in general, the only sober and indifferent persons, fit to *umpire* all the differences in the world, in a few propositions which they have framed. And so wedded are some wise and holy men unto these apprehensions of reconciling Christians by their *conceived methods*, that no experience of endless disappointments and of increasing new differences and digladiations, of forming new parties, of reviving old animosities, all which roll in upon them continually, will discourage them in their design. "What then?" will some say; "would you have these *divisions* and *differences* that are among us continued and perpetuated, when you acknowledge them so evil and pernicious?" I say, God forbid; yea, we pray for, and always will endeavour, their removal and taking away. But yet this I say, on the other hand, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, there is but *one way* of effecting this so blessed and desirable

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a work, which until it be engaged in, let men talk what they please of *reconciliation*, the worst of men will be reviling and persecuting those who are better than themselves unto the end of the world; and this way is, that all churches should endeavour to reduce themselves unto the *primitive pattern*. Let us all but consider what was the life and spirit of those churches, wherein their honour, glory, and order did consist, making it our joint design to walk in the principle of that grace of the Spirit wherein they walked, in the exercise and use of those *gifts* of the Spirit which were the spring of and gave virtue unto all their administrations, renouncing whatever is foreign unto and inconsistent with these things, and that grace and unity will quickly enter into professors which Christ hath purchased for them. But these things are here only occasionally mentioned, and are not farther to be pursued.

These spiritual gifts the apostle calls the "powers of the world to come," Heb. vi. 4, 5; that is, those effectual powerful principles and operations which peculiarly belong unto the kingdom of Christ and administration of the gospel, whereby they were to be set up, planted, advanced, and propagated in the world. The Lord Christ came and wrought out the mighty work of our salvation in his *own person*, and thereon laid the foundation of his church on himself, by the confession of him as the Son of God. Concerning himself and his work he preached, and caused to be preached, a doctrine that was opposed by all the world, because of its truth, mystery, and holiness; yet was it the design of God to break through all those oppositions, to cause this doctrine to be received and submitted unto, and Jesus Christ to be believed in, unto the ruin and destruction of the kingdom of Satan in the world. Now, this was a work that could not be wrought without the putting forth and exercise of mighty power; concerning which nothing remains to be inquired into but of what sort it ought to be. Now, the conquest that the Lord Christ aimed at was spiritual, over the souls and consciences of men; the enemies he had to conflict withal were spiritual, even principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places, the god of this world, the prince of it, which ruled in the children of disobedience; the kingdom which he had to erect was spiritual, and not of this world; all the laws and rules of it, with their administrations and ends, were spiritual and heavenly. The gospel that was to be propagated was a doctrine not concerning this world, nor the things of it, nor of any thing natural or political, but as they were merely subordinate unto other ends; but heavenly and mysterious, directing men only in a tendency according to the mind of God, unto the eternal enjoyment of him. Hereon it will easily appear what kind of power is necessary unto this work and for the attaining of these

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ends. He that, at the speaking of one word, could have engaged "more than twelve legions of angels" in his work and unto his assistance, could have easily, by outward force and arms, subdued the whole world into an external observance of him and his commands, and thereon have ruled men at his pleasure. As this he could have done, and may do when he pleaseth, so if he had done it, it had tended nothing unto the ends which he designed. He might, indeed, have had a glorious empire in the world, comprehensive of all dominions that ever were or can be on the earth; but yet it would have been of the same kind and nature with that which Nero had,—the greatest monster of villany in nature. Neither had it been any great matter for the Son of God to have out-done the Romans or the Turks, or such like conspiracies of wicked oppressors. And all those who yet think meet to use external force over the persons, lives, and bodies of men, in order unto the reducing of them unto the obedience of Christ and the gospel, do put the greatest dishonour upon him imaginable, and change the whole nature of his design and kingdom. He will neither own nor accept of any subject but whose obedience is a free act of his own will, and who is so made willing by himself in the day of his power. His design, and his only design, in this world, unto the glory of God, is to erect a kingdom, throne, and rule in the souls and consciences of men; to have an obedience from them in faith, love, and spiritual delight, proceeding from their own choice, understandings, wills, and affections; an obedience that should be internal, spiritual, mystical, heavenly, with respect solely unto things unseen and eternal, wherein himself and his laws should be infinitely preferred before all earthly things and considerations. Now, this is a matter that all earthly powers and empires could never desire, design, or put a hand unto, and that which renders the kingdom of Christ, as of another nature, so more excellent and better than all earthly kingdoms, as liberty is better than bondage, the mind more excellent than the outward carcass, spiritual and eternal things than things carnal and temporary, as the wisdom and holiness of God are more excellent than the folly and lusts of men.

Seeing, therefore, this was the design of Christ, this was the nature and work of the gospel which was to be propagated, wherein carnal power and outward force could be of no use, yea, whose exercise was inconsistent with, dishonourable unto, and destructive of the whole design, and wherein the work to be accomplished on the minds and souls of men is incomparably greater than the conquering of worlds with force and arms, it is inquired what power the Lord Christ did employ herein, what means and instruments he used for the accomplishment of his design, and the erecting of that kingdom or church-

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state which, being promised of old, was called "the world to come," or the "new world," "a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" and I say, it was those gifts of the Holy Ghost whereof we have treated, which were those "powers" of this "world to come." By them it was, or in their exercise, that the Lord Christ erected his empire over the souls and consciences of men, destroying both the work and kingdom of the devil. It is true, it is the word of the gospel itself that is the rod of his strength, which is sent out of Zion to erect and dispense his rule; but that hidden power which made the word effectual in the dispensation of it consisted in those gifts of the Holy Ghost. Men may despise them or think light of them whilst they please; they are those powers which the Lord Christ in his wisdom thought meet alone to engage in the propagation of the gospel, and the setting up of his kingdom in the world.

The recovery and return of the people from the captivity of Babylon was a type of the spiritual redemption of the church by Jesus Christ; and how God effected that as a type hereof he declares, Zech. iv. 6, "Not by army, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." So, much more, was this work to be effected. So, after his resurrection, the Lord Christ tells his apostles that they were to be his "witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth;" that is, all the world over, Acts i. 8. But how shall they be able so to bear testimony unto them as that their witness shall be received and become effectual? Saith he, "Ye shall receive power for this end. I have given you authority to preach the word before, and now I will give you such an ability for it as none shall be able to withstand or resist; and this is after the Holy Ghost is come upon you,—that is, in the communication of those gifts whereby ye may be enabled unto your work." In them consisted that "mouth and wisdom" which he promised he would give them, "which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay nor resist," Luke xxi. 15. Wherefore, that which I shall close this discourse withal shall be a brief endeavour to declare how those gifts were the spiritual powers of the gospel unto all the ends we have before mentioned, as designed by Jesus Christ; whence it will appear how little there was of the wisdom, skill, power, or authority of men in the whole work of propagating the gospel and planting the church of Christ, as we shall afterward manifest how, by the dispensation of the other more ordinary gifts of the Spirit, both the gospel and the church are continued and preserved in the world.

First, The persons whom the Lord Christ chose, called, and designed unto this work, were by those gifts enabled thereunto. As no mortal men had of themselves any sufficiency for such a work, so

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the persons particularly called unto it by Jesus Christ lay under all the disadvantages that any persons could possibly be liable unto in such an undertaking: for,—1. They were all of them unlearned and ignorant; which the Jews took notice of, Acts iv. 13, and which the Gentiles despised them for. 2. They were poor, and of no reputation in the world; which made them contemned by all sorts of persons. And, 3. They seem in many instances to have been pusillanimous and fearful; which they all manifested when they so shamefully fled and left their Master in his distresses, the chief of them also swearing that he knew him not. Now, it is easily understood what great disadvantages these were unto the undertaking of so great a work as they were called unto; yea, how impossible it was for them, under these qualifications, to do any thing in the pursuit of it. Wherefore, by the communication of these gifts unto them, all these impediments arising from themselves were removed, and they were furnished with endowments of quite another nature, whereby they were eminently filled with that spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, which surpassed all the wisdom that was of the world or in it, by what ways or means soever it were attained. (1.) They both had and declared a wisdom which none of the princes of this world were acquainted withal, 1 Cor. ii. 1–8, 13. Those who, during the abode of Christ in the flesh with them, could not understand a plain parable, and were ever and anon at no small loss about the sense and meaning of their Master, having very low and carnal apprehensions about his person, work, and office, were now filled with a knowledge of all heavenly mysteries, and with wisdom to declare, manage, and maintain them against all opposers. Kings, princes, rulers of synagogues, were now all one to them. They had a mouth and wisdom given them which none of their adversaries could resist. Wherever they came, in all nations, to all sorts of people, of all languages, they were now enabled, in their own tongue and speech, to declare and preach the gospel unto them, being always filled with a treasure of wisdom and spiritual mysteries, whence they could draw forth as every occasion did require. (2.) Whereas they were poor, the difficulties wherewith such a condition is attended were also by this means utterly taken away: for although they had neither silver nor gold by their work or employment, but their outward wants and distresses were rather increased thereby, yet their minds and souls were by this communication of the Spirit so raised above the world, and filled with such a contempt of all the desirable things in it, and of all the pride of men upon their account, as that their want of possessions and outward enjoyments made them only the more ready and expedite for their work; whence also such of them as had possessions, [having] sold them, gave their price to the poor, that they might be no hinderance

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unto them in their design. And hence also it was that those who, even after the resurrection of Christ, were inquiring after a temporal kingdom,—wherein, no doubt, a good part of its glory, power, and advantages would fall to their share, as most do who yet continue to dream of such a kingdom in this world,—immediately upon the communication of these gifts rejoiced that they were counted worthy of shame for the name of Christ, when they were imprisoned, whipped, and despitefully used, Acts v. 40, 41. (3.) They had boldness, courage, and constancy given unto them, in the room of that pusillanimity and fear which before they had discovered. This the Jews took notice of, and were astonished at, Acts iv. 13; and they had reason so to be, if we consider the power and authority of that work wherein they were then assaulted, with the speech of Peter unto them, verses 8–12, which he spake as filled with the Holy Ghost. See also Acts v. 28–32. And in the whole course of their ministry throughout the world, the like undaunted courage, resolution, and constancy, did always and in all things accompany them. Wherefore, these gifts, in the first place, may be esteemed the "powers of the world to come," inasmuch as by them those unto whom the work of preaching the gospel, propagating the mystery of it, the conversion of nations, the planting of churches, and in all the erection of the kingdom of Christ, was committed, were enabled by them, unto the utmost capacity of human nature, to discharge, effect, and accomplish the work committed unto them. By virtue and in the strength of these spiritual abilities did they set upon the whole kingdom of Satan and darkness in the world, contending with the gates of hell and all the powers of the earth, attempting the wisdom of the Greeks and the religion of the Jews, with success against both. They went not forth with force and arms, or carnal power; they threatened no man, menaced no man, with the carnal weapons of force or penalties; they had no baits or allurements of wealth, power, or honour, to inveigle the minds of corrupt and sensual men: but, as was said, in the warranty and power of these spiritual gifts, they both attempted and accomplished this work. And things continue still in the same condition, according unto their proportion. Such as is the furniture of men with spiritual abilities and gifts of the Holy Ghost, such is their fitness for the work of the ministry, and no other. And if any shall undertake this work without this provision of abilities for it, they will neither ever be owned by Christ nor be of the least use in the employment they take upon them. A ministry devoid of spiritual gifts is a sufficient evidence of a church under a degenerating apostasy. But these things will be farther spoken unto afterward.

Secondly, By these gifts were all their administrations, especially their preaching the gospel, rendered effectual unto their proper end.

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The preaching of the word, which is the "sword of the Spirit," was the great instrument whereby they wrought out and accomplished their designed work in the conviction and conversion of the souls of men. It may therefore be inquired what it was that gave efficacy and success unto the word as preached or dispensed by them. Now, this, as it should seem, must be either that the subject-matter of it was so suited unto the reasons and understandings of men as that they could not but admit of it upon its proposal; or that the manner whereby they declared it was with such persuasive artifices as were meet to prevail with the minds of men unto an assent, or to impose upon them against the best of their defences. But the apostle declares that it was utterly otherwise in both these regards: for the matter of the doctrine of the gospel, unto the minds of carnal men, —such as all men are until renewed by the gospel itself,—is folly, and that which is every way meet to be despised, 1 Cor. i. 18; and for the manner of its declaration, they did not therein, neither would they, use the enticing words of human wisdom, any arts of oratory, or dresses of rhetoric or eloquence, lest the effects which were wrought by the word should have seemed in any measure to have proceeded from them, chap. ii. 4, 5. Wherefore, not to mention that internal efficacious power of grace which God secretly puts forth for the conversion of his elect,—the consideration whereof belongs not unto our present design,—and I say that it was by virtue of those gifts that the administration of the gospel was so efficacious and successful; for,— 1. From them proceeded that authority over the minds of men wherewith the word was accompanied. When the Lord Christ was anointed by the Spirit to preach the gospel, it is said, "He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes," Matt. vii. 29. Whatever was his outward appearance in the flesh, the word, as administered by him, was attended with such an authority over the minds and consciences of men as they could not but be sensible of. And so was it with the primitive dispensers of the gospel. By virtue of these spiritual gifts, they preached the word "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," 1 Cor. ii. 4. There was accompanying of their preaching an evidence or demonstration of a power and authority that was from God and his Spirit. Men could not but conclude that there was something in it which was over them or above them, and which they must yield or submit unto as that which was not for them to contend withal. It is true, the power of the gospel was hid unto them that were to perish, whose minds the god of this world had effectually blinded, "lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4,—whence it came to pass that the word was rejected by many,—yet wherever God was pleased to make it effectual, it was by a sense of a divine authority

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accompanying its administration, by virtue of those spiritual gifts; and therefore our apostle shows that when men prophesied, or declared the mind of God from the word by the gift of prophecy, unbelievers did "fall down, and, worshipping God, reported that God was in them of a truth," 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. They were sensible of a divine authority, which they could not stand before, or withstand. 2. From hence also proceeded that life and power for conviction which the word was accompanied with in their dispensation of it. It became shortly to be the arrows of Christ, which were sharp in the hearts of men. As men found an authority in the dispensation of the word, so they felt and experienced an efficacy in the truths dispensed. By it were their minds enlightened, their consciences awakened, their minds convinced, their lives judged, the secrets of their hearts made manifest, as 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, until they cried out in multitudes, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Hereby did the Lord Christ in his kingdom and majesty ride prosperously, conquering and to conquer, with the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness, subduing the souls of men unto his obedience,—making them free, ready, willing, in the day of his power. These were the forces and weapons that he used in the establishing of his kingdom, which were "mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down of imaginations, and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. So doth the apostle describe the success of these administrations as an absolute conquest, wherein all opposition is broken, all strongholds and fortifications are demolished, and the whole reduced unto due obedience; for by this means were all things effected. All the strongholds of sin in the minds of men, in their natural darkness, blindness, and obstinacy; all the high fortifications of prejudices, and vain, proud, lofty imaginations, raised in them by Satan,—were all cast down by and before gospel administrations, managed by virtue and authority of these spiritual gifts, which the Lord Christ ordained to be the powers of his kingdom.

Thirdly, Those of them which consisted in miraculous operations were suited to fill the world with an apprehension of a divine power accompanying the word and them by whom it was administered. And sundry things unto the furtherance of the gospel depended hereon; as,—1. The world, which was stupid, asleep in sin and security, satisfied with their lusts and idolatries, regardless of any thing but present enjoyments, was awakened hereby to an attendance unto and inquiry into this new doctrine that was proposed unto them. They could not but take notice that there was something more than ordinary in that sermon which they were summoned unto

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by a miracle. And this was the first and principal use of these miraculous operations. They awakened the dull, stupid world unto a consideration of the doctrine of the gospel, which otherwise they would have securely neglected and despised. 2. They weakened and took off those mighty prejudices which their minds were possessed with by tradition and secular enjoyments. What these prejudices were I shall not here declare, I have done it elsewhere; it is enough to observe, that they were as great, as many, as effectual, as human nature in any case is capable of. But yet although they were sufficiently of proof against all other means of conviction, they could not but sink and weaken before the manifest evidence of present divine power, such as these miraculous operations were accompanied withal; for although all the things which they cleaved unto, and intended to do so inseparably, were, as they thought, to be preferred above any thing that could be offered unto them, yet when the divine power appeared against them, they were not able to give them defence. Hence, upon these operations one of these two effects ensued:—(1.) Those that were shut up under their obstinacy and unbelief were filled with tormenting convictions, and knew not what to do to relieve themselves. The evidence of miracles they could not withstand, and yet would not admit of what they tendered and confirmed; whence they were filled with disquietments and perplexities. So the rulers of the Jews manifested themselves to have been upon the curing of the impotent person at the gate of the temple. "What shall we do," say they, "to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them we cannot deny," Acts iv. 16. (2.) The minds of others were exceedingly prepared for the reception of the truth, the advantages unto that purpose being too many to be here insisted on. 3. They were a great means of taking off the scandal of the cross. That this was that which the world was principally offended at in the gospel is sufficiently known. "Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." Nothing could possibly be or have been a matter of so high offence unto the Jews as to offer them a crucified Messiah, whom they expected as a glorious king to subdue all their enemies; nor ever will they receive him, in the mind wherein they are, upon any other terms: and it seemed a part of the extremest folly unto the Grecians to propose such great and immortal things in the name of one that was himself crucified as a malefactor And a shame it was thought, on all hands, for any wise man to profess or own such a religion as came from the cross. But yet, after all this blustering of weakness and folly, when they saw this doctrine of the cross owned by God, and witnessed unto by manifest effects of divine power, they could not but begin to think that men need not be much ashamed of that

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which God so openly avowed. And all these things made way to let in the word into the minds and consciences of men; where, by its own efficacy, it gave them satisfying experience of its truth and power.

From these few instances, whereunto many of an alike nature might be added, it is manifest how these spiritual gifts were the "powers of the world to come,"—the means, weapons, arms, that the Lord Christ made use of for the subduing of the world, destruction of the kingdom of Satan and darkness, with the planting and establishment of his own church on the earth. And as they were alone suited unto his design, so his accomplishment of it by them is a glorious evidence of his divine power and wisdom, as might easily be demonstrated.

CHAPTER VI.

Of ordinary gifts of the Spirit—The grant, institution, use, benefit, end, and continuance of the ministry.

THE consideration of those ordinary gifts of the Spirit which are annexed unto the ordinary powers and duties of the church doth in the next place lie before us. And they are called ordinary, not as if they were absolutely common unto all, or were not much to be esteemed, or as if that were any way a diminishing term; but we call them so upon a double account:—1. In distinction from those gifts which, being absolutely extraordinary, did exceed the whole power and faculties of the souls of men, as healings, tongues, and miracles; for otherwise they are of the same nature with most of those gifts which were bestowed on the apostles and evangelists, differing only in degree. Every true gospel ministry hath now gifts of the same kind with the apostles, in a degree and measure sufficient to their work, excepting those mentioned. 2. Because of their continuance in the ordinary state of the church; which also they shall do unto the consummation of all things. Now, my design is to treat peculiarly of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But because there is a gift of Christ which is the foundation and subject of them, something must be spoken briefly unto that in the first place. And this gift of Christ is that of the ministry of the church; the nature of which office I shall not consider at large, but only speak unto it as it is a gift of Christ; and this I shall do by some little illustration given unto that passage of the apostle where this gift and the communication of it is declared: Eph. iv. 7–16, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

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Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

There is no other place of Scripture wherein at one view the grant, institution, use, benefit, end, and continuance of the ministry is so clearly and fully represented. And the end of this whole discourse is, to declare that the gift and grant of the ministry and ministers, of the office and the persons to discharge it, is an eminent, most useful fruit and effect of the mediatory power of Christ, with his love and care towards his church. And those of whom the apostle speaks ("Unto every one of us") are the officers or ministers whom he doth afterward enumerate, although the words may in some sense be extended unto all believers; but principally the ministry and ministers of the church are intended. And it is said, unto them is "grace given." It is evident that by "grace" here, not sanctifying, saving grace is intended, but a participation of a gracious favour with respect to an especial end. So the word is frequently used in this case by our apostle, Rom. xv. 15; Gal. ii. 9; Eph. iii. 8. This gracious favour we are made partakers of,—this trust is freely, in a way of grace, committed unto us; and that "according to the measure of the gift of Christ,"—unto every one, according as the Lord Christ doth measure the gift of it freely out unto them. Thus in general was the ministry granted unto the church, the particular account whereof is given in the ensuing verses. And,—

First, It is declared to be a gift of Christ: Καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκε,—"And he himself gave," Eph. iv. 11. It is the great fundamental of all church order, power, and worship, that the gift and grant of Christ is the original of the ministry. If it had not been so given of Christ, it had not been lawful for any of the sons of men to institute such an

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office, or appoint such officers. If any had attempted so to do, as there would have been a nullity in what they did, so their attempt would have been expressly against the headship of Christ, or his supreme authority over the church. Wherefore, that he would thus give ministers of the church was promised of old, Jer. iii. 15, as well as signally foretold in the psalm from whence these words are taken. And as his doing of it is an act of his mediatory power, as it is declared in this place, and Matt. xxviii. 18, so it was a fruit of his care, love, and bounty, 1 Cor. xii. 28. And it will hence follow, not only that offices in the church which are not of Christ's giving by institution, and officers that are not of his gift, grant, by provision and furnishment, have indeed no place therein, but also that they are set up in opposition unto his authority and in contempt of his care and bounty; for the doing so ariseth out of an apprehension both that men have a power in the church which is not derived from Christ, and that to impose servants upon him in his house without his consent, as also that they have more care of the church than he had, who made not such provision for them. And if an examination might be admitted by this rule, as it will one day come on whether men will or no, some great names now in the church would scarce be able to preserve their station. Popes, cardinals, metropolitans, diocesan prelates, archdeacons, commissaries, officials, and I know not what other monstrous products of an incestuous conjunction between secular pride and ecclesiastical degeneracy, would think themselves severely treated to be tried by this rule; but so it must be at last, and that unavoidably. Yea, and that no man shall be so hardy as once to dare attempt the setting up of officers in the church without the authority of Christ, the eminency of this gift and grant of his is declared in sundry particular instances, wherein neither the wisdom, nor skill, nor power of any or all of the sons of men, can have the least interest, or in any thing alike unto them.

And this appears,—1. From the grandeur of its introduction, or the great and solemn preparation that was made for the giving out of this gift. It was given by Christ "when he ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," Eph. iv. 8. The words are taken from Ps. lxviii. 17, 18, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." In the first place, the glorious appearance of God on Mount Sinai in giving of the law, his descending and ascending unto that purpose, is intended. But they are applied here unto Christ, because all the glorious works of God in and towards the church of old were either representatory or

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gradually introductory of Christ and the gospel. Thus the glorious ascending of God from Mount Sinai, after the giving of the law, was a representation of his "ascending up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things," as Eph. iv. 10. And as God then "led captivity captive" in the destruction of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, who had long held his people in captivity and under cruel bondage; so dealt the Lord Christ now in the destruction and captivity of Satan and all his powers, Col. ii. 15. Only, whereas it is said in the psalm that "he received gifts for men," here it is said that "he gave gifts to men:" wherein no small mystery is couched; for although Christ is God, and is so gloriously represented in the psalm, yet an intimation is given that he should act what is here mentioned in a condition wherein he was capable to receive from another, as he did in this matter, Acts ii. 33. And so the phrase in the original doth more than insinuate: לָקַחְתָּ מַתָּנוֹת בָּאָדָם, "Thou hast received gifts in Adam," —in the man, or human nature. And לָקַח signifies as well to *give* as to *receive*, especially when any thing is received to be given. Christ received this gift in the human nature to give it unto others. Now, to what end is this glorious theatre, as it were, prepared, and all this preparation made, all men being called to the preparation of it? It was to set out the greatness of the gift he would bestow, and the glory of the work which he would effect; and this was to furnish the church with ministers, and ministers with gifts for the discharge of their office and duty. And it will one day appear that there is more glory, more excellency, in giving one poor minister unto a congregation, by furnishing him with spiritual gifts for the discharge of his duty, than in the pompous instalment of a thousand popes, cardinals, or metropolitans. The worst of men, in the observance of a few outward rites and ceremonies, can do the latter; Christ only can do the former, and that as he is ascended up on high to that purpose.

2. It appears to be such an eminent gift from its original acquisition. There was a power acquired by Christ for this great donation, which the apostle declares, Eph. iv. 9, "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" Having mentioned the ascension of Christ as the immediate cause or fountain of the communication of this gift, verse 8, he found it necessary to trace it unto its first original. He doth not, therefore, make mention of the descending into the lower parts of the earth occasionally upon that of his ascending, as if he catched at an advantage of a word, nor doth he speak of the humiliation of Christ absolutely in itself, which he had no occasion for; but he introduceth it to show what respect this gift of the ministry and ministers, of the office, gifts, and persons, had thereunto. And Christ's descending into the lower parts of the earth may be taken two ways, according

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as that expression, "The lower parts of the earth," may be diversely understood: for the Τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς, "The lower parts of the earth," are either the whole earth,—that is, those lower parts of the creation,—or some part of it; for the word "lower" includes a comparison either with the whole creation or with some part of itself. In the first sense, Christ's state of humiliation is intended, wherein he came down from heaven into these lower parts of God's creation, conversing on the earth. In the latter, his grave and burial are intended; for the grave is the lowest part of the earth into which mankind doth descend. And both of these, or his humiliation as it ended in his death and burial, may be respected in the words. And that which the apostle designs to manifest is, that the deep humiliation and the death of Christ are the fountain and original of the ministry of the church, by way of acquisition and procurement. *It is a fruit whose root is in the grave of Christ;* for in those things, in the humiliation and death of Christ, lay the foundation of his mediatory authority, whereof the ministry is an effect, Phil. ii. 6–11. And it was appointed by him to be the ministry of that peace between God and man which was made therein and thereby, Eph. ii. 14, 16, 17; for when he had made this peace by the blood of the cross, he preached it in the giving these gifts unto men for its solemn declaration. See 2 Cor. v. 18–21. Wherefore, because the authority from whence this gift proceeded was granted unto Christ upon his descending into the lower parts of the earth, and the end of the gift is to declare and preach the peace which he made between God and man by his so doing, this gift relates thereunto also. Hereon doth the honour and excellency of the ministry depend, with respect hereunto is it to be esteemed and valued,—namely, its relation unto the spiritual humiliation of Christ,—and not from the carnal or secular exaltation of those that take it upon them.

3. It appears to be an eminent and signal gift from the immediate cause of its actual communication, or the present qualification of the Lord Christ for the bestowing of it; and this was his glorious exaltation upon his ascension. A right unto it was acquired by him in his death, but his actual investiture with all glorious power was to precede its communication, Eph. iv. 8, 10. He was first to ascend up on high, to triumph over all his and our adversaries, put now under him into absolute and eternal captivity, before he gave out this gift. And he is said here to "ascend far above all heavens,"—that is, these visible and aspectable heavens, which he passed through when he went into the glorious presence of God, or unto the right hand of the Majesty on high. See Heb. iv. 14, with our Exposition thereon. It is also added why he was thus gloriously exalted, and this was that he might "fill up all things;" not φυσικῶς, but ἐνεργητικῶς,—not

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in the essence of his nature, but in the exercise of his power. He had laid the foundation of his church on himself in his death and resurrection, but now the whole fabric of it was to be filled with its utensils and beautified with its ornaments. This he ascended to accomplish, and did it principally in the collation of this gift of the ministry upon it. This was the first exercise of that glorious power which the Lord Christ was vested withal upon his exaltation, the first effect of his wisdom and love, in filling all things, unto the glory of God and the salvation of his elect. And these things are mentioned, that in the contemplation of their greatness and order we may learn and judge how excellent this donation of Christ is. And it will also appear from hence how contemptible a thing the most pompous ministry in the world is, which doth not proceed from this original.

4. The same is manifest from the nature of the gift itself; for this gift consisteth in gifts: "He gave gifts," Eph. iv. 8. There is an active giving expressed, "He gave;" and the thing given, that is, "gifts." Wherefore the ministry is a gift of Christ, not only because freely and bountifully given by him to the church, but also because spiritual gifts do essentially belong unto it, are indeed its life, and inseparable from its being. A ministry without gifts is no ministry of Christ's giving, nor is of any other use in the church but to deceive the souls of men. To set up such a ministry is both to despise Christ and utterly to frustrate the ends of the ministry, those for which Christ gave it, and which are here expressed; for,—(1.) Ministerial gifts and graces are the great evidence that the Lord Christ takes care of his church and provides for it, as called into the order and unto the duties of a church. To set up a ministry which may be continued by outward forms and orders of men only, without any communication of gifts from Christ, is to despise his authority and care. Neither is it his mind that any church should continue in order any longer or otherwise than as he bestows these gifts for the ministry. (2.) That these gifts are the only means and instruments whereby the work of the ministry may be performed, and the ends of the ministry attained, shall be farther declared immediately. The ends of the ministry here mentioned, called its "work," are, the "perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of Christ, until we all come unto a perfect man." Hereof nothing at all can be done without these spiritual gifts; and therefore a ministry devoid of them is a mock ministry, and no ordinance of Christ.

5. The eminency of this gift appears in the variety and diversity of the offices and officers which Christ gave in giving of the ministry. He knew there would, and had appointed there should, be a twofold estate of the church, Eph. iv. 11,—(1.) Of its first election and foundation; (2.) Of its building and edification. And different both offices

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and gifts were necessary unto these different states; for:—(1.) Two things were extraordinary in the first erection of his church:—[1.] An extraordinary aggression was to be made upon the kingdom of Satan in the world, as upheld by all the potentates of the earth, the concurrent suffrage of mankind, with the interest of sin and prejudices in them. [2.] The casting of men into a new order, under a new rule and law, for the worship of God; that is, the planting and erecting of churches all the world over. With respect unto these ends, extraordinary officers, with extraordinary authority, power, and abilities, were requisite. Unto this end, therefore, he "gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists;" of the nature of whose offices and their gifts we have spoken before. I shall here only add, that it was necessary that these officers should have their immediate call and authority from Christ, antecedent unto all order and power in the church, for the very being of the church depended on their power of office. But this, without such an immediate power from Christ, no man can pretend unto. And what was done originally by their persons is now done by their word and doctrine; for the church is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone," Eph. ii. 20. (2.) There was a state of the church in its edification, which was to be carried on, according to the rules and laws given by Christ, in the ordinary administration of all the ordinances and institutions of the gospel. To this end Christ gives ordinary officers, "pastors and teachers," who by his direction were "ordained in every church," Acts xiv. 23. And these are all the teaching officers that he hath given unto his church; or if any shall think that in the enumeration of them in this place, as also 1 Cor. xii. 28, our apostle forgot popes and diocesan bishops, with some others,—who certainly cannot but laugh to themselves that they should be admitted in the world as church-officers,—he must speak for himself.

"But whereas the other sort of officers was given by Christ, by his immediate call and communication of power unto them, it doth not appear how he gives these ordinary officers or ministers unto it." I answer, he did it originally, and continueth to do it, by the ways and means ensuing:—

(1.) He doth it by the law and rule of the gospel, wherein he hath appointed this office of the ministry in his church, and so always to be continued. Were there not such a standing ordinance and institution of his, it were not in the power of all the churches in the world to appoint any such among them, whatever appearance there may be of a necessity thereof; and if any should have attempted any such thing, no blessing from God would have accompanied their endeavour, so that they would but set

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up an idol of their own. Hereon we lay the continuance of the ministry in the church. If there be not an ordinance and institution of Christ unto this purpose, or if, such being granted, yet the force of it be now expired, we must and will readily confess that the whole office is a mere usurpation. But if he have given "pastors and teachers" unto his church, to continue until all his saints in all ages "come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," Eph. iv. 11–13, and hath promised to be with them, as such, unto the consummation of all things, Matt. xxviii. 18–20; if the apostles by his authority ordained elders in every church and city, Acts xiv. 23, Tit. i. 5, and who therein were made overseers of the flocks by the Holy Ghost, Acts xx. 28, having the charge of feeding and overseeing the flock that is among them always, until the chief Shepherd shall appear, 1 Pet. v. 1–5; if believers, or the disciples of Christ, are obliged by him always to yield obedience unto them, Heb. xiii. 7, 17; with other such plain declarations of the will of the Lord Christ in the constitution and continuance of this office;—this foundation standeth firm and unshaken as the ordinances of heaven, that shall not be changed. And whereas there is not in the Scripture the least intimation of any such time, state, or condition of the church, as wherein the disciples of Christ may or ought to live from under the orderly conduct and guidance of the ministers, it is vain to imagine that any defect in other men, any apostasy of the greatest part of any or all visible churches, should cast them into an incapacity of erecting a regular ministry among them and over them; for whereas the warranty and authority of the ministry depends on this institution of Christ, which is accompanied with a command for its observance, Matt. xxviii. 18–20, all his disciples being obliged to yield obedience thereunto, their doing so in the order and manner also by him approved is sufficient to constitute a lawful ministry among them. To suppose that because the church of Rome and those adhering unto it have, by their apostasy, utterly lost an evangelical ministry among them, that therefore others unto whom the word of God is come, and hath been effectual unto their conversion, have not sufficient warranty from the word to yield obedience unto all the commands of Christ (which, when we have talked of power and authority whilst we please, is all that is left unto us in this world), or that in so doing he will not accept them and approve of what they have done, is an assertion fit for men to maintain who have a trade to drive in religion unto their own especial advantage.

(2.) The Lord Christ giveth and continueth this office by giving spiritual gifts and abilities unto men, to enable them to discharge the duties and perform the work of it. This is that which I principally

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design to confirm in its proper place, which will immediately ensue. All I shall say at present is, that spiritual gifts of themselves make no man actually a minister; yet no man can be made a minister according to the mind of Christ who is not partaker of them. Wherefore, supposing the continuance of the law and institution mentioned, if the Lord Christ do at any time, or in any place, cease to give out spiritual gifts unto men, enabling them in some good measure unto the discharge of the ministry, then and in that place the ministry itself must cease and come to an end. To erect a ministry by virtue of outward order, rites, and ceremonies, without gifts for the edification of the church, is but to hew a block with axes, and smooth it with planes, and set it up for an image to be adored. To make a man a minister who can do nothing of the proper peculiar work of the ministry, nothing towards the only end of it in the church, is to set up a dead carcass, fastening it to a post, and expecting it should do you work and service.

(3.) He doth it by giving power unto his church in all ages to call and separate unto the work of the ministry such as he hath fitted and gifted for it. The things before mentioned are essentially constituent of the ministry; this belongs unto the outward order of their entrance into the ministry who are by him called thereunto. And concerning this we may observe the things following:—[1.] That this power in the church is not despotical or lordly, but consists in a faculty, right, and ability, to act in this matter obedientially unto the command of Christ. Hence all the acting of the church in this matter is nothing but an instituted means of conveying authority and office from Christ unto persons called thereunto. The church doth not give them any authority of its own or resident in itself; but only, in a way of obedience unto Christ, doth transmit power from him unto them who are called. Hence do they become the ministers of Christ, and not of the bishops, or churches, or men, holding their office and authority from Christ himself, by the law and rule of the gospel; so that whosoever despiseth them, despiseth him also in them. Some would have ministers of the gospel to receive all their authority from the people that choose them, and some from the bishops who ordain them, and whence they have theirs I know not. But this is to make them ministers of men and servants of men, and to constitute other masters between them and Christ. And whereas all church power is originally and absolutely vested in Christ, and in him solely, so that none can be partaker of the least interest in it or share of it without a communication of it from him unto them, neither popes, nor prelates, nor people, are able to produce any such grant or concession of power unto them from him as that they should have an authority residing in them and in their

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power, to dispose unto others as they see cause, so as they should hold it from them as a part or efflux of the power vested in them. It is obedience unto the law of Christ, and following the guidance of his previous communication of gifts as a means to communicate his power unto them who are called to the ministry, that is the whole of what is committed unto any in this kind. [2.] The church hath no power to call any unto the office of the ministry, where the Lord Christ hath not gone before it in the designation of him by an endowment with spiritual gifts; for if the whole authority of the ministry be from Christ, and if he never give it but where he bestows these gifts with it for its discharge, as in Eph. iv. 7, 8, etc., then to call any to the ministry whom he hath not so previously gifted is to set him aside, and to act in our own name and authority. And by reason of these things the Holy Ghost is said to make men overseers of the flocks who are thus called thereunto; because both the communication of power in the constitution of the law, and of spiritual gifts by internal effectual operation, are from him alone, Acts xx. 28. [3.] The outward way and order whereby a church may call any person unto the office of the ministry among them and over them, is by their joint solemn submission unto him in the Lord, as unto all the powers and duties of this office, testified by their choice and election of him. It is concerning this outward order that all the world is filled with disputes, about the call of men unto the ministry; which yet, in truth, is of the least concernment therein: for whatever manner or order be observed herein, if the things before mentioned be not premised thereunto, it is of no validity or authority. On the other hand, grant that the authority of the ministry dependeth on the law, ordinance, and institution of Christ, that he calls men unto this office by the collation of spiritual gifts unto them, and that the actings of the church herein are but an instituted moral means of communicating office-power from Christ himself unto any, and let but such other things be observed as the light and law of nature requireth in cases of an alike kind, and the outward mode of the church's acting herein need not much be contended about. It may be proved to be a beam of truth from the light of nature, that no man should be imposed on a church for their minister against their wills or without their express consent, considering that his whole work is to be conversant about their understandings, judgments, wills, and affections; and that this should be done by their choice and election,—as the Scripture doth manifestly declare, Num. viii. 9, 10, Acts i. 23, 26, vi. 3–6, xiv. 23, so, that it was for some ages observed sacredly in the primitive churches,—cannot modestly be denied. But how far any people or church may commit over this power of declaring their consent and acquiescency unto

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others to act for them, and as it were in their stead, so as that the call to office should yet be valid, and provided the former rules be observed, I will not much dispute with any, though I approve only of what maketh the nearest approaches to the primitive pattern that the circumstances of things are capable of. [4.] The Lord Christ continueth his bestowing of this gift by the solemn ordinance of setting apart those who are called in the manner declared, by "fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands," Acts xiii. 2, 3, xiv. 23; 1 Tim. iv. 14. By these means, I say, doth the Lord Christ continue to declare that he accounts men faithful, and puts them into the ministry, as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. i. 12.

There are yet remaining sundry things in the passage of the apostle which we now insist on, that declare the eminency of this gift of Christ, which may yet be farther briefly considered, as,—

6. The end why it is bestowed; and this is expressed,—(1.) Positively, as to the good and advantage of the church thereby, Eph. iv. 12; (2.) Negatively, as to its prohibition and hinderance of evil, verse 14.

(1.) In the end of it as *positively* expressed three things may be considered:—[1.] That it is πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων,—that is, for the gathering of the saints into complete church-order. The subject-matter of this part of their duty is the saints; that is, by calling and profession, such as are all the disciples of Christ. And that which is effected towards them is καταρτισμός, their coagmentation, jointing, or compacting into order. So the word signifies, Gal. vi. 1. And this effect is here declared, Eph. iv. 16. It is true, the saints mentioned may come together into some initial church-order by their consent and agreement to walk together in all the ways of Christ, and in obedience unto all his institutions, and so become a church essentially before they have any ordinary pastor or teacher, either by the conduct of extraordinary officers, as at first, or through obedience unto the word (hence elders were ordained among those who were in church-state, that is, thus far, before, Acts xiv. 23); but they cannot come to that perfection and completeness which is designed unto them. That which renders a church completely organical, the proper seat and subject of all gospel worship and ordinances, is this gift of Christ in the ministry.

But it may be asked, Whether a church before it come unto this καταρτισμός, or *completeness*, before it hath any minister in office, or hath by any means lost the ministry among them, may not delegate and appoint some one or more from among themselves to administer all the ordinances of the gospel among them and unto them, and by that means make up their own perfection?

[2.] The church being so completed, these officers are given unto

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it "for the work of the ministry." This expression is comprehensive, and the particulars included in it are not in this place to be inquired into. It may suffice unto our present purpose to consider that it is a *work*, not a *preferment;* and a work they shall find it who design to give up a comfortable account of what is committed unto them. It is usually observed that all the words whereby the work of the ministry is expressed in the Scripture do denote a peculiar industrious kind of labour, though some have found out ways of honour and ease to be signified by them. And,—[3.] Both these are directed unto one general issue. It is all εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, —"unto the edification of the body of Christ." Not to insist on the metaphors that are in this expression, the excellency of the ministry is declared, in that the object of its duty and work is no other but the body of Christ himself; and its end, the edification of this body, or its increase in faith and obedience, in all the graces and gifts of the Spirit, until it come unto conformity unto him and the enjoyment of him. And a ministry which hath not this object and end is not of the giving or grant of Christ.

(2.) The end of the ministry is expressed *negatively*, or with respect unto the evils which it is ordained for our deliverance from, Eph. iv. 14. [1.] The evil which we are hereby delivered from is, the danger of being perniciously and destructively deceived by false doctrines, errors, and heresies; which then began, and have ever since, in all ages, continued to infest the churches of God. These the apostle describes,—1*st.* From the design of their authors, which is "to deceive;" 2*dly.* Their diligence in that design, "They lie in wait to accomplish it;" 3*dly.* The means they use to compass their end, which are "sleights and cunning craftiness," managed sometimes with impetuous violence, and thence called a "wind of doctrine." And, [2.] The means hereof is our deliverance out of a child-like state, accompanied with,—1*st.* Weakness; 2*dly.* Instability; and, 3*dly.* Wilfulness. And sad is the condition of those churches which either have such ministers as will themselves toss them up and down by false and pernicious doctrines, or are not able by sound instructions to deliver them from such a condition of weakness and instability as wherein they are not able to preserve themselves from being in these things imposed on by the "cunning sleights of men that lie in wait to deceive." And as this ministry is always to continue in the church, verse 13, so it is the great means of influencing the whole body, and every member of it, unto a due discharge of their duty, unto their edification in love, verses 15, 16.

Designing to treat of the spiritual gifts bestowed on the ministry of the church, I have thus far diverted unto the consideration of the ministry itself as it is a gift of Christ, and shall shut it up with a

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few corollaries. As,—1. Where there is any office erected in the church that is not in particular of the gift and institution of Christ, there is a nullity in the whole office, and in all administrations by virtue of it. 2. Where the office is appointed, but gifts are not communicated unto the person called unto it, there is a nullity as to his person, and a disorder in the church. 3. It is the duty of the church to look on the ministry as an eminent grant of Christ, with valuation, thankfulness, and improvement. 4. Those who are called unto this office in due order labour to approve themselves as a gift of Christ; which it is a shameless impudence for some to own who go under that name. 5. This they may do in labouring to be furnished,—(1.) With gracious qualifications; (2.) Useful endowments; (3.) Diligence and laborious travail in this work; (4.) By an exemplary conversation, in,—[1.] Love; [2.] Meekness; [3.] Self-denial; [4.] Readiness for the cross, etc.

CHAPTER VII.

Of spiritual gifts enabling the ministry to the exercise and discharge of their trust and office.

UNTO the ministry so given unto the church, as hath been declared, the Holy Ghost gives spiritual gifts enabling them unto the exercise and discharge of the power, trust, and office committed unto them. Now, although I am not thoroughly satisfied what men will grant or allow in these days, such uncouth and bold principles are continually advanced among us, yet I suppose it will not, in words at least, be denied by many but that ministers have, or ought to have, gifts for the due discharge of their office. To some, indeed, the very name and word is a derision, because it is a name and notion peculiar to the Scripture. Nothing is more contemptible unto them than the very mention of "the gifts of the Holy Ghost." At present I deal not with such directly, though what we shall prove will be sufficient for their rebuke, though not for their conviction. Wherefore our inquiry is, whether the Spirit of God doth effectually collate on the ministers of the gospel spiritual gifts, enabling them to perform and effect evangelical administrations, according to the power committed unto them and duly required of them, unto the glory of Christ and edification of the church. It is moreover inquired, whether the endowment of men with these spiritual gifts, in a degree and measure suited unto public edification, be not that which doth materially constitute them ministers of the gospel, as being antecedently necessary unto their call unto their office. These

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things, I say, are to be inquired into, because, in opposition unto the first, it is affirmed that these supposed gifts are nothing but mere natural abilities, attained by diligence and improved by exercise, without any especial respect unto the working of the Holy Ghost, at least otherwise than what is necessary unto the attaining of skill and ability in any human art or science, which is the ordinary blessing of God on man's honest endeavours. And to the other it is opposed, that a lawful, ordinary, outward call is sufficient to constitute any man a lawful minister, whether he have received any such gifts as those inquired after or no. Wherefore, the substance of what we have to declare and confirm is, that there is an especial dispensation and work of the Holy Ghost in providing able ministers of the new testament for the edification of the church, wherein the continuance of the ministry and being of the church, as to its outward order, doth depend; and that herein he doth exert his power and exercise his authority in the communication of spiritual gifts unto men, without a participation whereof no man hath, *de jure*, any lot or portion in this ministration. Herein consists no small part of that work of the Spirit which belongs unto his promised dispensation in all ages; which to deny is to renounce all faith in the promise of Christ, all regard unto his continued love and care towards the church in the world, or at least the principal pleadable testimony given thereunto, and under pretence of exalting and preserving the church, totally to overthrow it. Now, the evidence which we shall give unto this truth is contained in the ensuing assertions, with their confirmation:—

First, The Lord Jesus Christ hath faithfully promised to be present with his church "unto the end of the world." It is his temple and his tabernacle, wherein he will dwell and walk continually. And this presence of Christ is that which makes the church to be what it is,—a congregation essentially distinct from all other societies and assemblies of men. Let men be formed into what order you please, according unto any outward rules and measures that are either given in the Scripture or found out by themselves, let them derive power and authority by what claim soever they shall think fit, yet if Christ be not present with them, they are no church, nor can all the powers under heaven make them so to be. And when any church loseth the especial presence of Christ, it ceaseth so to be. It is, I suppose, confessed with and among whom Christ is thus present, or it may be easily proved. See his promises to this purpose, Matt. xxviii. 20; Rev. xxi. 3. And those churches do exceedingly mistake their interest who are solicitous about other things, but make little inquiry after the evidences of the presence of Christ among them. Some walk as if they supposed they had him sure enough, as it were, immured in their walls, whilst they keep up the

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name of a church, and an outward order that pleaseth and advantageth themselves. But outward order, be it what it will, is so far from being the only evidence of the presence of Christ in a church, that when it is alone, or when it is principally required, it is none at all; and therefore, whereas preaching of the word and the right administration of the sacraments are assigned as the notes of a true church, if the outward acts and order of them only be regarded, there is nothing of evidence unto this purpose in them.

Secondly, This promised presence of Christ is by his Spirit. This I have sufficiently proved formerly, so that here I shall be brief in its rehearsal, though it be the next foundation of what we have farther to offer in this case. We speak not of the essential presence of Christ with respect unto the immensity of his divine nature, whereby he is equally present in or equally indistant from all places, manifesting his glory when, where, and how he pleaseth. Nor doth it respect his human nature; for when he promised this his presence, he told his disciples that therein he must leave and depart from them, John xvi. 5–8, whereon they were filled with sorrow and trouble, until they knew how he would make good the promise of his presence with them, and who or what it was that should unto their advantage supply his bodily absence. And this he did in his visible ascension, when "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight," Acts i. 9; when also it was given in charge unto them not to expect his return until his coming unto judgment, verse 11. And, accordingly, Peter tells us that the "heaven must receive him until the times of restitution of all things," Acts iii. 21, when he will appear again "in the glory of his Father," Matt. xvi. 27, even that glory which the Father gave him upon his exaltation, Phil. ii. 9–11, joined unto "that glory which he had with him before the world was," John xvii. 5. In and upon this his departure from them, he taught his disciples how they should understand his promise of being present and abiding "with them unto the end of the world;" and this was by sending of his Holy Spirit in his name, place, and stead, to do all to them and for them which he had yet to do with them and for them. See John xiv. 16–18, 26–28, xv. 26, xvi. 7–15. And other vicar in the church Christ hath none, nor doth stand in need of any, nor can any mortal man supply that charge and office; nor was any such ever thought of in the world until men grew weary of the conduct and rule of the Holy Spirit, by various ways taking his work out of his hand, leaving him nothing to do in that which they called "the church." But I suppose I need not handle this principle as a thing in dispute or controversy. If I greatly mistake not, this presence of Christ in his church by his Spirit is an article of faith unto the catholic church, and such a fundamental truth as who-

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ever denies it overthrows the whole gospel; and I have so confirmed it in our former discourses concerning the dispensation and operations of the Holy Ghost, as that I fear not nor expect any direct opposition thereunto. But yet I acknowledge that some begin to talk as if they owned no other presence of Christ but by the word and sacraments;—whatever else remains to be done lies wholly in ourselves. It is acknowledged that the Lord Christ is present in and by his word and ordinances; but if he be no otherwise present, or be present only by their external administration, there will no more church-state among men ensue thereon than there is among the Jews, who enjoy the letter of the Old Testament and the institutions of Moses. But when men rise up in express contradiction unto the promises of Christ and the faith of the catholic church in all ages, we shall not contend with them. But,—

Thirdly, This presence of the Spirit is secured unto the church by an everlasting, unchangeable covenant: Isa. lix. 21, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." This is God's covenant with the gospel church, to be erected then when "the Redeemer should come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob," verse 20. This is a part of the covenant that God hath made in Christ the Redeemer. And as the continuance of the word unto the church in all ages is by this promise secured,—without which it would cease and come to nothing,—seeing it is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets," Eph. ii. 20, so is the presence of the Spirit in like manner secured unto it, and that on the same terms with the word, so as that if he be not present with it, all covenant-relation between God and it doth cease. Where this promise doth not take place, there is no church, no ordinances, no acceptable worship, because no covenant-relation. In brief, then, where there is no participation of the promise of Christ to send the Spirit to abide with us always, no interest in that covenant wherein God engageth that his Spirit shall not depart from us for ever, and so no presence of Christ to make the word and ordinances of worship living, useful, effectual in their administration, unto their proper ends, there is no church-state, whatever outward order there may be. And hereon,—

Fourthly, The gospel is called the ministration of the Spirit, and the ministers of it the ministers of the Spirit: 2 Cor. iii. 6, "Who hath also made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the Spirit;" not of the "ministration of death," but of that of the "Spirit," which is "glorious," verses 7, 8. There never

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was, nor ever shall be, any but these two ministrations in the church, —that of the letter and of death, and that of the Spirit and of life. If there be a ministration in any church, it must belong to one of these; and all ministers must be so either of the letter or of the Spirit. If there be a ministry pretended unto that is neither of the letter nor of the Spirit, it is antichristian. The ministry which was carnal, of the letter and death, was a true ministry, and in its place glorious, because it was appointed of God, and was efficacious as unto its proper end; that of the gospel is of the Spirit, and much more glorious; but if there be a ministration that hath the outward form of either, but indeed is neither of them, it is no ministration at all. And where it is so, there is really no ministration but that of the Bible,—that is, God by his providence continuing the Bible among them, maketh use of it as he seeth good for the conviction and conversion of sinners; wherein there is a secret manifestation of the Spirit also.

We may, therefore, inquire in what sense the ministration of the gospel is called the "ministry of the Spirit." Now, this cannot be because the laws, institutions, and ordinances of its worship were revealed by the Spirit, for so were all the ordinances and institutions of the old testament, as hath been proved before, and yet the ministration of them was the ministration of the letter and of death, in a worldly sanctuary, by carnal ordinances. Wherefore it must be so called in one of these respects: either,—1. Because it is the peculiar aid and assistance of the Spirit whereby any are enabled to administer the gospel and its institutions of worship according to the mind of God, unto the edification of the church. In this sense men are said to be made "able ministers of the new testament," —that is, ministers able to administer the gospel in due order. Thus in that expression, "ministers of the Spirit," the "Spirit" denotes the efficient cause of the ministry, and he that quickeneth it, verse 6. Or,—2. It may be said to be the "ministration of the Spirit," because in and by the ministry of the gospel the Spirit is in all ages administered and communicated unto the disciples of Christ, unto all the ends for which he is promised. So Gal. iii. 2, the Spirit is received by "the teaching of faith." Take it either way, and the whole of what we plead for is confirmed. That he alone enableth men unto the discharge of the work of the ministry, by the spiritual gifts which he communicateth unto them, is the first sense, and expressly that which we contend for; and if, in and by the ministration of the gospel in all ages, the Spirit is communicated and administered unto men, then doth he abide with the church for ever, and for what ends we must farther inquire.

Fifthly, The great end for which the Spirit is thus promised, admi-

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nistered, and communicated under the gospel, is the continuance and preservation of the church in the world. God hath promised unto the Lord Christ that his kingdom in this world should endure "throughout all generations," with the course of the sun and moon, Ps. lxxii. 5, and that "of the increase of his government there should be no end," Isa. ix. 7; and the Lord Christ himself hath declared his preservation of his church, so as that "the gates of hell should not prevail against it," Matt. xvi. 18. It may therefore be inquired whereon the infallible accomplishment of these promises, and others innumerable unto the same end, doth depend, or what is that means whereby they shall be certainly executed. Now, this must be either some work of God or man. If it be of men, and it consist of their wills and obedience, then that which is said amounts hereunto, namely, that where men have once received the gospel, and professed subjection thereunto, they will infallibly abide therein in a succession from one generation unto another. But besides that it must be granted that what so depends on the wills of men can have no more certainty than the undetermined wills of men can give security of, which indeed is none at all, so there are confessed instances without number of such persons and places as have lost the gospel and the profession thereof; and what hath fallen out in one place may do so in another, and consequently in all places where the reasons and causes of things are the same. On this supposition, therefore, there is no security that the promises mentioned shall be infallibly accomplished. Wherefore the event must depend on some work of God and Christ. Now, this is no other but the dispensation and communication of the Spirit. Hereon alone doth the continuance of the church and of the kingdom of Christ in the world depend. And whereas the church falls under a double consideration,—namely, of its internal and external form, of its internal spiritual union with Christ and its outward profession of obedience unto him,—the calling, gathering, preservation, and edification of it in both respects belong unto the Holy Spirit. The first he doth, as hath been proved at large, by his communicating effectual saving grace unto the elect; the latter, by the communication of gifts unto the guides, rulers, officers, and ministers of it, with all its members, according unto its place and capacity. Suppose, then, his communication of internal saving grace to cease, and the church must absolutely cease as to its internal form; for we are united unto the Lord Christ as our mystical head by the Spirit, the one and self-same Spirit dwelling in him and them that do believe. Union unto Christ without saving grace, and saving grace without the Holy Spirit, are strangers unto the gospel and Christian religion; so is it to have a church that is holy and catholic which is not united unto Christ as a mystical head. Wherefore the very

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being of the church, as unto its internal form, depends on the Spirit in his dispensation of grace; which if you suppose an intercision of, the church must cease. It hath the same dependence on him as to its outward form and profession, upon his communication of gifts; for "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord," or profess subjection and obedience unto him in a due manner, "but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. xii. 3. Suppose this work of his to cease, and there can be no professing church. Let men mould and cast themselves into what order and form they please, and let them pretend that their right and title unto their church power and station is derived unto them from their progenitors or predecessors, if they are not furnished with the gifts of the Spirit, to enable their guides unto gospel administrations, they are no orderly gospel church. Wherefore,—

Sixthly, The communication of such gifts unto the ordinary ministry of the church in all ages is plainly asserted in sundry places of the Scripture, some whereof may be briefly considered. The whole nature of this work is declared in the parable of the talents, Matt. xxv., from verse 14 to 30. The state of the church from the ascension of Christ unto his coming again unto judgment,—that is, in its whole course on the earth,—is represented in this parable. In this season he hath servants whom he intrusteth in the affairs of his kingdom, in the care of his church, and the propagation of the gospel. That they may, in their several generations, places, and circumstances, be enabled hereunto, he gives them, in various distributions, talents to trade withal, the least whereof was sufficient to encourage them who received them unto their use and exercise. The trade they had to drive was that of the administration of the gospel, its doctrine, worship, and ordinances, to others. Talents are abilities to trade, which may also comprise opportunities and other advantages, but abilities are chiefly intended. These were the gifts whereof we speak; nor did it ever enter into the minds of any to apprehend otherwise of them. And they are abilities which Christ, as the king and head of his church, giveth unto men in an especial manner, as they are employed under him in the service of his house and work of the gospel. The servants mentioned are such as are called, appointed, and employed in the service of the house of Christ; that is, all ministers of the gospel, from first to last. And their talents are the gifts which he endows them withal, by his own immediate power and authority, for their work. And hence these three things follow:—1. That wherever there is a ministry that the Lord Christ setteth up, appointeth, or owneth, he furnisheth all those whom he employs therein with gifts and abilities suitable to their work; which he doth by the Holy Spirit. He will never fail to own his institutions, with gracious supplies, to render them effectual. 2. That where

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any have not received talents to trade withal, it is the highest presumption in them, and casts the greatest dishonour on the Lord Christ, as though he requires work where he gave no strength, or trade where he gave no stock, for any one to undertake the work of the ministry. Where the Lord Christ gives no gifts, he hath no work to do. He will require of none any especial duty where he doth not give an especial ability; and for any to think themselves meet for this work and service in the strength of their own natural parts and endowments, however acquired, is to despise both his authority and his work. 3. For those who have received of these talents, either not to trade at all, or to pretend the managing of their trade on another stock,—that is, either not sedulously and duly to exercise their ministerial gifts, or to discharge their ministry by other helps and means,—is to set up their own wisdom in opposition unto his, and his authority. In brief, that which the whole parable teacheth is, that wherever there is a ministry in the church that Christ owneth or regardeth, as used and employed by him, there persons are furnished with spiritual gifts from Christ by the Spirit, enabling them unto the discharge of that ministry; and where there are no such spiritual gifts dispensed by him, there is no ministry that he either accepteth or approveth.

Rom. xii. 4–8, "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy," etc. It is indifferent, as to our present purpose, whether the apostle treat here of offices or of duties only; the things ensuing, which are plain and obvious in the text, are sufficient unto the confirmation of what we plead for:—1. It is the ordinary state of the church, its continuance [on] being planted, its preservation and edification, that the apostle discourseth about; wherefore what he speaks is necessary unto the church in all ages and conditions. To suppose a church devoid of the gifts here mentioned, is to overthrow the whole nature and end of a gospel church. 2. That the principle of all administrations in the church-state described is gifts received from Jesus Christ by his Spirit; for, declaring the way whereby the church may be edified, he layeth the foundation of it in this, that "to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ:" for the apostle exhorts those unto whom he speaks to attend unto those duties whereby the church may be edified, and that by virtue of the gifts which they had received. All the whole duty of any one in the church lies in this, that he act according to the χάρισμα that he is made partaker of. And what these χαρίσματα are, as also by whom they are bestowed, hath been already fully de-

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clared. 3. That these gifts give not only ability for duty, but rule and measure unto all works of service that are to be performed in the church. Every one is to act therein according to his gift, and no otherwise. To say that this state of the church is now ceased, and that another state is introduced, wherein all gospel administrations may be managed without spiritual gifts, or not by virtue of them, is to say that which, *de facto*, is true in most places; but whether the true nature of the church is not overthrown thereby is left unto consideration. 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11, is a parallel testimony hereunto, and many others to the same purpose might be pleaded, together with that which is the foundation of this whole discourse, Eph. iv. 7–16, etc. Only let it be remembered, that, in this whole discourse, by "gifts" I do understand those χαρίσματα πνευματικά, those spiritual largesses, which are neither absolutely natural endowments nor attainable by our own industry and diligence.

Seventhly, These gifts, as they are bestowed unto that end, so they are indispensably necessary unto gospel administrations; for, as we have proved, they are spiritual, and not legal or carnal. And spiritual administrations cannot be exercised in a due manner without spiritual gifts; yea, one reason why they are spiritual, and so called, is, because they cannot be performed without the aid and assistance of the Holy Spirit in and by these gifts of his. Had the Lord Christ appointed administrations of another nature, such as were every way suited unto the reason of men, and to be exercised by the powers thereof, there had been no need of these spiritual gifts; for the spirit of a man knoweth the things of a man, and will both guide and act him therein. And whereas these administrations are, in their nature, use, signification, and efficacy, spiritual, it is by spiritual gifts alone that they may be managed. Hence these things do live and die together; where the one is not, there neither will the other be. Thus, when many, perhaps the most who were outwardly called unto office in the church, began to be carnal in their hearts and lives, and to neglect the use of these gifts, neither applying themselves unto the attaining of them, nor endeavouring to excite or increase what they had received by diligence or constant exercise, refusing to trade with the talent committed unto them, they quickly began to wax weary of spiritual administrations also. Hereon, in compliance with many corrupt affections, they betook themselves unto an outward, carnal, ceremonious worship and administration of ordinances, which they might discharge and perform without the least aid or assistance of the Holy Ghost or supply of spiritual gifts. So, in the neglect of these gifts, and the loss of them which ensued thereon, lay the beginning of the apostasy of the Christian church as to its outward profession; which was quickly com-

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pleted by the neglect of the grace of the Spirit, whereby it lost both truth and holiness. Nor could it be otherwise; for, as we have proved, the outward form and being of the church, as to its visible profession, depend on the reception and use of them. On their decay, therefore, the church must decay as to its profession, and in their loss is its ruin. And we have an instance in the church of Rome what various, extravagant, and endless inventions the minds of men will put them upon to keep up a show of worship, when, by the loss of spiritual gifts, spiritual administrations are lost also. This is that which their innumerable forms, modes, sets of rites and ceremonies, seasons of worship, are invented to supply; but to no purpose at all, but only the aggravation of their sin and folly.

In the last place, we plead the event, even in the days wherein we live; for the Holy Ghost doth continue to dispense spiritual gifts for gospel administrations in great variety unto those ministers of the gospel who are called unto their office according unto his mind and will. The opposition that is made hereunto by profane scoffers is not to be valued. The experience of those who are humble and wise, who, fearing God, do inquire into these things, is appealed unto. Have they not an experiment of this administration? Do they not find the presence of the Spirit himself, by his various gifts in them, by whom spiritual things are administered unto them? Have they not a proof of Christ speaking in them by the assistance of his Spirit, making the word mighty unto all its proper ends? And as the thing itself, so the variety of his dispensations manifest themselves also unto the experience of believers. Who sees not how different are the gifts of men, the Holy Ghost dividing unto every one as he will? And the experience which they have themselves who have received these gifts, of the especial assistance which they receive in the exercise of them, may also be pleaded. Indeed, the profaneness of a contrary apprehension is intolerable among such as profess themselves to be Christians. For any to boast themselves [that] they are sufficient of themselves for the stewardly dispensation of the mysteries of the gospel by their own endowments, natural or acquired, and the exercise of them, without a participation of any peculiar spiritual gift from the Holy Ghost, is a presumption which contains in it a renunciation of all or any interest in the promises of Christ made unto the church for the continuance of his presence therein. Let men be never so well persuaded of their own abilities; let them pride themselves in their performances, in reflection of applauses from persons unacquainted with the mystery of these things; let them frame to themselves such a work of the ministry as whose discharge stands in little or no need of these gifts; yet it will at length appear that where the gifts of the Holy Ghost are excluded from their administration,

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the Lord Christ is so, and the Spirit himself is so, and all true edification of the church is so, and so are all the real concerns of the gospel.

And so have we, as I hope, confirmed the second part of the work of the Holy Ghost with respect unto spiritual gifts,—namely, his continuance to distribute and communicate unto the church to the end of the world, according unto the powers and duties which he hath erected in it or required of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

Of the gifts of the Spirit with respect unto doctrine, worship, and rule—How attained and improved.

THERE remain yet two things to be spoken unto with respect unto the gifts which the Holy Ghost bestows on the ministers of the gospel, to qualify them unto their office, and to enable them unto their work; and these are,—I. What they are; II. How they are to be attained and improved.

I. In our inquiry after the first, or what are the gifts whereby men are fitted and enabled for the ministry, we wholly set aside the consideration of all those gracious qualifications of faith, love, zeal, compassion, careful tender watchfulness, and the like, whereon the holy use of their ministry doth depend; for our inquiry is only after those gifts whereon depends the very being of the ministry. There may be a true ministry in some cases where there is no sanctifying grace; but where there are no spiritual gifts, there is no ministry at all. They are, in general, abilities for the due management of the spiritual administrations of the gospel, in its doctrine, worship, and discipline, unto the edification of the church. It is not easy, nay, it may be, unto us it is not possible, to enumerate in particular all the various gifts which the Holy Ghost endows the ministers of the gospel withal; but whereas all the concerns of the church may be referred unto these three heads, of doctrine, worship, and rule, we may inquire what are the principal spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost with respect unto them distinctly.

The first great duty of the ministry, with reference unto the church, is the dispensation of the doctrine of the gospel unto it, for its edification. As this is the duty of the church continually to attend unto, Acts ii. 42, so it is the principal work of the ministry, the foundation of all other duties, which the apostles themselves gave themselves unto in an especial manner, chap. vi. 4. Hence is it given in charge unto all ministers of the gospel, Acts xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 2; 1 Tim. i. 3, iv. 13, 16, v. 17; 2 Tim. iv. 1–3;—for this is the principal

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means appointed by Christ for the edification of his church, that whereby spiritual life is begotten and preserved. Where this work is neglected or carelessly attended unto, there the whole work of the ministry is despised. And with respect unto this ministerial duty there are three spiritual gifts that the Holy Ghost endoweth men withal, which must be considered:—

1. The first is wisdom, or knowledge, or understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, the revelation of the mystery of God in Christ, with his mind and will towards us therein. These things may be distinguished, and they seem to be so in the Scripture sometimes. I put them together, as all of them denote that acquaintance with and comprehension of the doctrine of the gospel which is indispensably necessary unto them who are called to preach it unto the church. This some imagine an easy matter to be attained; at least, that there is no more, nor the use of any other means, required thereunto, than what is necessary to the acquisition of skill in any other art or science. And it were well if some, otherwise concerned in point of duty, would but lay out so much of their strength and time in the obtaining of this knowledge as they do about other things which will not turn much unto their account. But the cursory perusal of a few books is thought sufficient to make any man wise enough to be a minister; and not a few undertake ordinarily to be teachers of others who would scarcely be admitted as tolerable disciples in a well-ordered church. But there belongeth more unto this wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, than most men are aware of. Were the nature of it duly considered, and withal the necessity of it unto the ministry of the gospel, probably some would not so rush on that work as they do, which they have no provision of ability for the performance of. It is, in brief, such a comprehension of the scope and end of the Scripture, of the revelation of God therein; such an acquaintance with the systems of particular doctrinal truths, in their rise, tendency, and use; such a habit of mind in judging of spiritual things, and comparing them one with another; such a distinct insight into the springs and course of the mystery of the love, grace, and will of God in Christ,—as enables them in whom it is to declare the counsel of God, to make known the way of life, of faith and obedience, unto others, and to instruct them in their whole duty to God and man thereon. This the apostle calls his "knowledge in the mystery of Christ," which he manifested in his writings, Eph. iii. 4. For as the gospel, the dispensation and declaration whereof is committed unto the ministers of the church, is the "wisdom of God in a mystery," 1 Cor. ii. 7; so their principal duty is to become so wise and understanding in that mystery as that they may be able to declare it unto others; without which they have no ministry committed

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unto them by Jesus Christ. See Eph. i. 8, 9, iii. 3–6, 18, 19; Col. iv. 3. The sole inquiry is, whence we may have this wisdom, seeing it is abundantly evident that we have it not of ourselves. That in general it is from God, that it is to be asked of him, the Scripture everywhere declares. See Col. i. 9, ii. 1, 2; 2 Tim. ii. 7; James i. 5; 1 John v. 20. And in particular it is plainly affirmed to be the especial gift of the Holy Ghost. He gives the "word of wisdom," 1 Cor. xii. 8; which place hath been opened before. And it is the first ministerial gift that he bestows on any. Where this is not in some measure, to look for a ministry is to look for the living among the dead. And they will deceive their own souls in the end, as they do those of others in the meantime, who on any other grounds do undertake to be preachers of the gospel. But I shall not here divert unto the full description of this spiritual gift, because I have discoursed concerning it elsewhere.

2. With respect unto the doctrine of the gospel, there is required unto the ministry of the church skill to divide the word aright; which is also a peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost: 2 Tim. ii. 15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Both the former clauses depend on the latter. If a minister would be accepted with God in his work, if he would be found at the last day "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,"—that is, such a builder of the house of God as whose work is meet, proper, and useful,—he must take care to "divide the word of truth," which is committed unto his dispensation, "rightly," or in a due manner. Ministers are stewards in the house of God, and dispensers of the mysteries thereof; and therefore it is required of them that they give unto all the servants that are in the house, or do belong unto it, a meet portion, according unto their wants, occasions, and services, suitable unto the will and wisdom of their Lord and Master: Luke xii. 42, 43, "Who is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?" for this giving of provision and a portion of meat unto the household of Christ consists principally in the right dividing and distribution of the word of truth. It is the taking out from those great stores of it in the Scripture, and, as it were, cutting off a portion suitable unto the various conditions of those in the family. Herein consists the principal skill of a scribe furnished for the kingdom of heaven with the wisdom before described; and without this, a common course of dispensing or preaching the word, without differencing of persons and truths, however it may be gilded over with a flourish of words and oratory, is shameful work in the house of God. Now, unto this skill sundry things are required:—(1.) A sound judgment in general

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concerning the state and condition of those unto whom any one is so dispensing the word. It is the duty of a shepherd to know the state of his flock; and unless he do so he will never feed them profitably. He must know whether they are babes, or young men, or old; whether they need milk or strong meat; whether they are skilful or unskilful in the word of righteousness; whether they have their senses exercised to discern good and evil, or not; or whether his hearers are mixed with all these sorts;—whether, in the judgment of charity, they are converted unto God, or are yet in an unregenerate condition;—what probably are their principal temptations, their hinderances and furtherances; what is their growth or decay in religion. He that is not able to make a competent judgment concerning these things, and the other circumstances of the flock, so as to be steered thereby in his work, will never evidence himself to be "a workman that needeth not to be ashamed." (2.) An acquaintance with the ways and methods of the work of God's grace on the minds and hearts of men, that he may pursue and comply with its design in the ministry of the word. Nothing is by many more despised than an understanding hereof; yet is nothing more necessary to the work of the ministry. The word of the gospel as preached is "vehiculum gratiæ," and ought to be ordered so as it may comply with its design in its whole work on the souls of men. He, therefore, who is unacquainted with the ordinary methods of the operation of grace fights uncertainly in his preaching of the word, like a man beating the air. It is true, God can, and often doth, direct a word of truth, spoken as it were at random, unto a proper effect of grace on some or other; as it was when the man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: but ordinarily a man is not like to hit a joint who knows not how to take his aim. (3.) An acquaintance with the nature of temptation, with the especial hinderances of faith and obedience, which may befall those unto whom the word is dispensed, is in like manner required hereunto. Many things might be added on this head, seeing a principal part of ministerial skill doth consist herein. (4.) A right understanding of the nature of spiritual diseases, distempers, and sicknesses, with their proper cures and remedies, belongeth hereunto. For the want hereof the hearts of the wicked are oftentimes made glad in the preaching of the word, and those of the righteous filled with sorrow; the hands of sinners are strengthened, and those who are looking towards God are discouraged or turned out of the way. And where men either know not these things, or do not or cannot apply themselves skilfully to distribute the word according to this variety of occasion, they cannot give the household its portion of meat in due season. And he that wants this spiritual gift will never

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divide the word aright, unto its proper ends, 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. And it is lamentable to consider what shameful work is made for want hereof in the preaching of some men; yea, how the whole gift is lost, as to its power, use, and benefit.

3. The gift of utterance also belongeth unto this part of the ministerial duty, in the dispensation of the doctrine of the gospel. This is particularly reckoned by the apostle among the gifts of the Spirit, 1 Cor. i. 5; 2 Cor. viii. 7. And he desires the prayers of the church that the gift may abide with himself, and abound in him, Eph. vi. 19. And he there declares that the nature of it consists in the "opening of the mouth boldly, to make known the mysteries of the gospel;" as also Col. iv. 3. Now, this utterance doth not consist in a natural volubility of speech, which, taken alone by itself, is so far from being a gift of the Spirit, or a thing to be earnestly prayed for, as that it is usually a snare to them that have it, and a trouble to them that hear them; nor doth it consist in a rhetorical ability to set off discourses with a flourish of words, be they never so plausible or enticing; much less in a bold corrupting of the ordinance of preaching by a foolish affectation of words, in supposed elegancies of speech, quaint expressions, and the like effects of wit,—that is, fancy and vanity. But four things do concur hereunto:—(1.) Παῤῥησία, or "dicendi libertas." The word we translate "utterance" is λόγος, that is, speech; but that not speech in general, but a certain kind of speech, is intended, is evident from the places mentioned, and the application of them. And it is such a speech as is elsewhere called παῤῥησία,—that is, a freedom and liberty in the declaration of the truth conceived. This a man hath when he is not, from any internal defect, or from any outward consideration, straitened in the declaration of those things which he ought to speak. This frame and ability the apostle expresseth in himself: 2 Cor. vi. 11, "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged." A free, enlarged spirit, attended with an ability of speech suited unto the matter in hand, with its occasions, belong to this gift. (2.) So also doth boldness and holy confidence. So we often render παῤῥησία, wherein this utterance doth much consist. When the Spirit of God, in the midst of difficulties, oppositions, and discouragements, strengtheneth the minds of ministers, so as that they are not terrified with any amazement, but discharge their work freely, as considering whose word and message it is that they do deliver, [this] belongs to this gift of utterance. (3.) So also doth gravity in expression, becoming the sacred majesty of Christ and his truths, in the delivery of them. He that speaks is to "speak as the oracles of God," 1 Pet. iv. 11,—that is, not only as to truth, preaching the word of God and nothing else, but doing it with that gravity and soundness of speech which become

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them who speak the oracles of God; for as we are to deliver "sound doctrine," and nothing else, Tit. i. 9, so we are to use "sound speech, that cannot be condemned," chap. ii. 7, 8. (4.) Hereunto, also, belongs that authority which accompanieth the delivery of the word, when preached in demonstration of these spiritual abilities. For all these things are necessary that the hearers may receive the word, "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."

These are the principal spiritual gifts wherewith the Holy Ghost endows the ministers of the church with respect unto the effectual dispensation of the word, or the doctrine of the gospel, which is committed unto them; and where they are communicated in any such degree as is necessary unto the due discharge of that office, they will evidence themselves to the consciences of them that do believe. The dispensation of the word by virtue of them, though under great variety from the various degrees wherein they are communicated, and the different natural abilities of them that do receive them, will be sufficiently distinguished and remote from that empty, wordy, sapless way of discoursing of spiritual things, which is the mere effect of the wit, fancy, invention, and projection of men destitute of the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and the mysteries of the gospel.

The second head of duties belonging unto the ministerial office respects the worship of God. By the worship of God here, I understand only that especial part thereof whereof himself is the immediate object: for, absolutely, the preaching and hearing of the word is a part of sacred worship, as that wherein we act the obedience of faith unto the commands of God, and submit ourselves unto his institutions; and, indeed, as unto those that hear, it is God declaring himself by his word that is the immediate object of their worship. But the dispensation of the word which we have considered is the acting of men, upon the authority and command of God, towards others. But, as was said, by that we inquire into, I intend that alone whereof God himself was the immediate object. Such are all the remaining offices and duties of the church, those only excepted which belong to its rule. And this worship hath various acts, according to the variety of Christ's institutions and the church's occasions: yet, as to the manner of its performance, it is comprised in prayer; for by prayer we understand all the confessions, supplications, thanksgivings, and praises, that are made unto God in the church, whether absolutely or in the administration of other ordinances, as the sacraments. Wherefore, in this duty, as comprehensive of all the sacred offices of public worship, as the glory of God is greatly concerned, so it is the principal act of obedience in the church. This, then, as to the performance of it, depends either on the natural abilities of men, or on the aids and operation of the Holy Ghost. By the natural abilities

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of men, I understand not only what they are able of themselves in every instance to perform, but also whatever assistance they may make use of, either of their own finding out or of others'; and by the aids of the Holy Ghost, I intend an especial spiritual gift bestowed on men to this purpose. Now, to suppose that the whole duty of the church herein should consist in the actings of men in their own strength and power, without any especial assistance of the Holy Spirit, is to exclude the consideration of him from those things with respect whereunto he is principally promised by our Lord Jesus Christ. But what concerneth this gift of the Holy Ghost hath been at large handled by itself already, and must not here be again insisted on. Taking for granted what is therein sufficiently confirmed, I shall only add, that those who have not received this gift are utterly unfit to undertake the office of the ministry, wherein it is their duty to go before the church in the administration of all ordinances, by virtue of these abilities. In things civil or secular, it would be esteemed an intolerable solecism to call and choose a man to the discharge of an office or duty whose execution depended solely on such a peculiar faculty or skill as he who is so called hath no interest in or acquaintance with; and it will one day appear to be so also in things sacred and religious, yea, much more.

Thirdly, The rule of the church belongeth unto the ministers of it. God hath established rule in the church, Rom. xii. 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Thess. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 7, 17. I dispute not now of what sort this ministry is, nor whether the rule belong unto one sort alone. It is enough unto my present design that it is committed by Christ unto the ministers of the church, which are its guides, rulers, and overseers. Nor shall I at present inquire into the particular powers, acts, and duties of this rule; I have done it elsewhere. I am only now to consider it so far as its exercise requireth an especial ministerial gift to be communicated by the Holy Ghost. And in order thereunto the things ensuing must be premised:—1. That this rule is spiritual, and hath nothing in common with the administration of the powers of the world. It hath, I say, no agreement with secular power and its exercise, unless it be in some natural circumstances that inseparably attend rulers and ruled in any kind. It belongs unto the kingdom of Christ and the administration of it, which are "not of this world." And as this is well pleaded by some against those who would erect a kingdom for him in the world, and, as far as I can understand, of this world, framed in their own imaginations unto a fancied interest of their own; so it is as pleadable against them who pretend to exercise the rule and power of his present kingdom after the manner of the potestative administrations of the world. When our Saviour forbade all rule unto his disciples after the man-

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ner of the Gentiles, who then possessed all sovereign power in the world, and told them that it should not be so with them, that some should be great and exercise dominion over others, but that they should serve one another in love, the greatest condescension unto service being required of them who are otherwise most eminent, he did not intend to take from them or divest them of that spiritual power and authority in the government of the church which he intended to commit unto them. His design, therefore, was to declare what that authority was not, and how it should not be exercised. A lordly or despotical power it was not to be; nor was it to be exercised by penal laws, courts, and coercive jurisdiction, which was the way of the administration of all power among the Gentiles. And if that kind of power and rule in the church which is for the most part exercised in the world be not forbidden by our Saviour, no man living can tell what is so; for as to meekness, moderation, patience, equity, righteousness, they were more easy to be found in the legal administrations of power among the Gentiles than in those used in many churches. But such a rule is signified unto them, the authority whereof, from whence it proceedeth, was spiritual; its object the minds and souls of men only; and the way of whose administration was to consist in a humble, holy, spiritual application of the word of God or rules of the gospel unto them. 2. The end of this rule is merely and solely the edification of the church. All the power that the apostles themselves had, either in or over the church, was but unto their edification, 2 Cor. x. 8. And the edification of the church consists in the increase of faith and obedience in all the members thereof, in the subduing and mortifying of sin, in fruitfulness in good works, in the confirmation and consolation of them that stand, in the raising up of them that are fallen, and the recovery of them that wander, in the growth and flourishing of mutual love and peace; and whatever rule is exercised in the church unto any other end is foreign to the gospel, and tends only to the destruction of the church itself. 3. In the way and manner of the administration of this rule and government two things may be considered:—(1.) What is internal, in the qualifications of the minds of them by whom it is to be exercised: such are wisdom, diligence, love, meekness, patience, and the like evangelical endowments. (2.) What is external, or what is the outward rule of it; and this is the word and law of Christ alone, as we have elsewhere declared.

From these things it may appear what is the nature, in general, of that skill in the rule of the church which we assert to be a peculiar gift of the Holy Ghost. If it were only an ability or skill in the canon or civil law, or rules of men; if only an acquaintance with the nature and course of some courts, proceeding litigiously, by cita-

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tions, processes, legal pleadings, issuing in pecuniary mulcts, outward coercions, or imprisonments,—I should willingly acknowledge that there is no peculiar gift of the Spirit of God required thereunto. But the nature of it being as we have declared, it is impossible it should be exercised aright without especial assistance of the Holy Ghost. Is any man of himself sufficient for these things? Will any man undertake of himself to know the mind of Christ in all the occasions of the church, and to administer the power of Christ in them and about them? Wherefore the apostle, in many places, teacheth that wisdom, skill, and understanding to administer the authority of Christ in the church unto its edification, with faithfulness and diligence, are an especial gift of the Holy Ghost, Rom. xii. 6, 8; 1 Cor. xii. 28. It is the Holy Ghost which makes the elders of the church its bishops or overseers, by calling them to their office, Acts xx. 28; and what he calls any man unto, that he furnisheth him with abilities for the discharge of.

And so have we given a brief account of those ordinary gifts which the Holy Ghost communicates unto the constant ministry of the church, and will do so unto the consummation of all things, having, moreover, in our passage manifested the dependence of the ministry on this work of his; so that we need no addition of pains to demonstrate that where he goeth not before in the communication of them, no outward order, call, or constitution is sufficient to make any one a minister of the gospel.

There are gifts which respect duties [of private believers] only. Such are those which the Holy Ghost continues to communicate unto all the members of the church in a great variety of degrees, according to the places and conditions which they are in, unto their own and the church's edification. There is no need that we should insist upon them in particular, seeing they are of the same nature with them which are continued unto the ministers of the church, who are required to excel in them, so as to be able to go before the whole church in their exercise. The Spirit of the gospel was promised by Christ unto all his disciples, unto all believers, unto the whole church, and not unto the guides of it only. To them he is so in an especial manner, with respect unto their office, power, and duty, but not absolutely or only. As he is the Spirit of grace, he quickens, animates, and unites the whole body of the church, and all the members of it, in and unto Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. And as he is the administrator of all supernatural gifts, he furnisheth the whole body and all its members with spiritual abilities unto its edification, Eph. iv. 15, 16; Col. ii. 19. And without them, in some measure or degree, ordinarily, we are not able to discharge our duty unto the glory of God; for,—

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1. These gifts are a great means and help to excite and exercise grace itself, without which it will be lifeless and apt to decay. Men grow in grace by the due exercise of their own gifts in duties. Wherefore, every individual person on his own account doth stand in need of them with respect unto the exercise and improvement of grace, Zech. xii. 10. 2. Most men have, it may be, such duties incumbent on them with respect unto others as they cannot discharge aright without the especial aid of the Spirit of God in this kind. So is it with all them who have families to take care of and provide for; for ordinarily they are bound to instruct their children and servants in the knowledge of the Lord, and to go before them in that worship which God requires of them, as Abraham did, the "father of the faithful." And hereunto some spiritual abilities are requisite; for none can teach others more than they know themselves, nor perform spiritual worship without some spiritual gifts, unless they will betake themselves unto such shifts as we have before on good grounds rejected. 3. Every member of a church in order according to the mind of Christ possesseth some place, use, and office in the body, which it cannot fill up unto the benefit and ornament of the whole without some spiritual gift. These places are various, some of greater use than others, and of more necessity unto the edification of the church; but all are useful in their kind. This our apostle disputes at large, 1 Cor. xii. 12–20, etc. All believers in due order do become one body, by the participation of the same Spirit and union unto the same Head. Those who do not so partake of the one Spirit, who are not united unto the Head, do not properly belong to the body, whatever place they seem to hold therein. Of those that do so, some are as it were an eye, some as a hand, and some as a foot; all these are useful in their several places, and needful unto one another. None of them is so highly exalted as to have the least occasion of being lifted up, as though he had no need of the rest, for the Spirit distributeth unto every one severally as he will,—not all unto any one, save only unto the Head, our Lord Jesus, from whom we all receive grace according to the measure of his gift; nor is any so depressed or useless as to say it is not of the body, nor that the body hath no need of it, but every one in his place and station concurs to the unity, strength, beauty, and growth of the body: which things our apostle disputes at large in the place mentioned. 4. Hereby are supplies communicated unto the whole from the Head, Eph. iv. 15, 16; Col. ii. 19. It is of the body, that is, of the church under the conduct of its officers, that the apostle discourseth in those places. And the duty of the whole it is to "speak the truth in love," every one in his several place and station. And herein God hath so ordered the union of the whole church in itself, unto and in dependence on its

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Head, as that through and by not only the "supply of every joint," (which may express either the officers or more eminent members of it,) but the "effectual working of every part," in the exercise of the graces and gifts which the Spirit doth impart to the whole, the body may "edify itself" and be increased. Wherefore,—5. The Scripture is express that the Holy Ghost doth communicate of those gifts unto private believers, and directs them in that duty wherein they are to be exercised, 1 Pet. iv. 10. "Every man," that is, every believer, walking in the order and fellowship of the gospel, is to attend unto the discharge of his duty, according as he hath received spiritual ability. So was it in the church of Corinth, 1 Cor. i. 5–7, and in that of the Romans, chap. xv. 14, as they all of them knew that it was their duty to "covet the best gifts;" which they did with success, 1 Cor. xii. 31. And hereon depend the commands for the exercise of those duties which, in the ability of these gifts received, they were to perform. So were they all to "admonish one another," to "exhort one another," to "build up one another in their most holy faith." And it is the loss of those spiritual gifts which hath introduced amongst many an utter neglect of these duties, so as that they are scarce heard of among the generality of them that are called Christians. But, blessed be God, we have large and full experience of the continuance of this dispensation of the Spirit, in the eminent abilities of a multitude of private Christians, however they may be despised by them who know them not! By some, I confess, they have been abused: some have presumed on them beyond the line and measure which they have received; some have been puffed up with them; some have used them disorderly in churches and to their hurt; some have boasted of what they have not received;—all which miscarriages also befell the primitive churches. And I had rather have the order, rule, spirit, and practice of those churches that were planted by the apostles, with all their troubles and disadvantages, than the carnal peace of others in their open degeneracy from all those things.

II. It remains only that we inquire how men may come unto or attain a participation of these gifts, whether ministerial or more private. And unto this end we may observe,—1. That they are not communicated unto any by a sudden *afflatus* or extraordinary infusion, as were the gifts of miracles and tongues, which were bestowed on the apostles and many of the first converts. That dispensation of the Spirit is long since ceased, and where it is now pretended unto by any, it may justly be suspected as an enthusiastic delusion; for as the end of those gifts, which in their own nature exceed the whole power of all our faculties, is ceased, so is their communication, and the manner of it also. Yet this I must say, that the infusion of spiritual light into the mind, which is the foundation of all gifts, as

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hath been proved, being wrought sometimes suddenly or in a short season, the concomitancy of gifts in some good measure is oftentimes sudden, with an appearance of something extraordinary, as might be manifested in instances of several sorts. 2. These gifts are not absolutely attainable by our own diligence and endeavours in the use of means, without respect unto the sovereign will and pleasure of the Holy Ghost. Suppose there are such means of the attainment and improvement of them, and that several persons do, with the same measures of natural abilities and diligence, use those means for that end, yet it will not follow that all must be equally partakers of them. They are not the immediate product of our own endeavours, no, not as under an ordinary blessing upon them; for they are χαρίσματα, arbitrary largesses or gifts, which the Holy Spirit worketh in all persons severally as he will. Hence we see the different events that are among them who are exercised in the same studies and endeavours; some are endued with eminent gifts, some scarce attain unto any that are useful, and some despise them, name and thing. There is, therefore, an immediate operation of the Spirit of God in the collation of these spiritual abilities, which is unaccountable by the measures of natural parts and industry. Yet I say, 3. That ordinarily they are both attained and increased by the due use of means suited thereunto, as grace is also, which none but Pelagians affirm to be absolutely in the power of our own wills; and the naming of these means shall put an issue unto this discourse.

Among them, in the first place, is required a due preparation of soul, by humility, meekness, and teachableness. The Holy Spirit taketh no delight to impart of his especial gifts unto proud, self-conceited men, to men vainly puffed up in their own fleshly minds. The same must be said concerning other vicious and depraved habits of mind, by which, moreover, they are ofttimes expelled and cast out after they have been in some measure received. And in this case I need not mention those by whom all these gifts are despised; it would be a wonder indeed if they should be made partakers of them, or at least if they should abide with them.

Secondly, Prayer is a principal means for their attainment. This the apostle directs unto when he enjoins us earnestly to desire the best gifts; for this desire is to be acted by prayer, and no otherwise.

Thirdly, Diligence in the things about which these gifts are conversant. Study and meditation on the word of God, with the due use of means for the attaining a right understanding of his mind and will therein, is that which I intend. For in this course, conscientiously attended unto, it is that, for the most part, the Holy Spirit comes in and joins his aid and assistance for furnishing of the mind with those spiritual endowments.

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Fourthly, The growth, increase, and improvement of these gifts depend on their faithful use according as our duty doth require. It is trade alone that increaseth talents, and exercise in a way of duty that improveth gifts. Without this they will first wither and then perish. And by a neglect hereof are they lost every day, in some partially, in some totally, and in some to a contempt, hatred, and blasphemy of what themselves had received.

Lastly, Men's natural endowments, with elocution, memory, judgment, and the like, improved by reading, learning, and diligent study, do enlarge, set off, and adorn these gifts, where they are received.

END OF VOL. IV.

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